

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House sent a new set of budget proposals to Congress Friday and top officials to meet with congressional leaders in hopes of averting a second government shutdown in as many months. "We have done considerable work in the past 24 hours and should be able to respond to any good faith effort to bridge the gap," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry. "These ideas" were designed to bridge the gaps in assumptions between the White House and congressional forecasting numbers, he added. White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin met with congressional leaders behind closed doors for 90 minutes Friday, saying only that they would get together again later. The Democratically-controlled White House and the Republican-dominated Congress were first at loggerheads over whether to pledge to balance the budget within seven years, and whose figures to use in measuring a deficit that dates back to 1969. The other major issue is what combination of cut or taxes to use to achieve that goal.



Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراية.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.N. investigators have found Russian markings on the Iraqi-bound military equipment seized last month by Jordan, the Washington Post said Friday quoting U.N. and U.S. officials. The United States, however, is unsure whether the sophisticated equipment, valued at \$25 million which Russia has denied sending and Iraq has denied trying to import, was secretly sanctioned by Moscow or was obtained by criminals on the black market. The officials said the equipment was shipped in some 30 boxes to Amman in August on flights that originated in Moscow, and the equipment inside was clearly marked and recognisable. "These are Russian-made components," said one official, adding that the 100 sets of advance guidance equipment such as accelerometers and gyroscopes were designed for use in Russian long-range missiles but could be adapted to short-range ones.

Syria, Israel clear way to resume peace talks

Israel will have to pay 'full price' for peace — Peres

Combined agency dispatches

S. SECRETARY OF State Warren Christopher said he made "substantial progress" talks Friday with President Arafat, as Syria and Israel dropped obstacles to summing their deadlocked peace talks. Mr. Christopher outlined Israeli proposals to unblock peace negotiations during a week of talks with Mr. Assad. He spoke of "substantial progress" before leaving Amman for Israel to submit Syria's concepts for peace to Prime Minister Shimon Peres. But the U.S. secretary, on his 15th Middle East peace mission, declined to discuss details. "It is premature to make public the ideas that Israel and Syria are communicating with each other in confidence," he said. He added, however, that

the two sides "clearly want to press forward."

Syrian presidential spokesman Jibril Kuriyeh said Mr. Assad told Mr. Christopher of his concepts for peace and stressed his commitment to reaching a settlement.

A senior U.S. official said Mr. Christopher was buoyed by his meeting with Mr. Assad and that Syria and Israel were ready to restart their stalled peace negotiations without preconditions.

"Christopher feels his meeting with Assad was very positive. He brought ideas and concepts about procedure and substance. The response was positive and there was willingness to offer a new concept from here as well," he said.

"Neither side is imposing conditions right now for discussions. They are much more open and there is a sense that now is the time to press ahead."

"But we haven't finalised the procedure yet," the official added, asking not to be named.

Mr. Christopher made no comment as he arrived later in Tel Aviv and left immediately for Jerusalem, where he was due to dine with Mr. Peres to update him on the result of his talks with Mr. Assad.

Depending on the outcome of his discussions in Israel, the secretary of state is to return Sunday to Damascus, where sources close to the U.S. delegation expect Syria and Israel to resume negotiations at the level of ambassadors or experts.

Mr. Christopher is seeking the right format to press ahead with Israeli-Syrian negotiations which ground to a halt in June over security arrangements for the Golan Heights.

Mr. Peres said in an interview published on Friday that

he had no doubt Israel would have to pay the full price for full peace with Syria.

Mr. Peres' office confirmed he made the remark to the mass circulation Israeli newspaper Maariv.

It was the closest Israel has come to — though still short of meeting — Syria's demand the Jewish state commit itself to a total withdrawal from the Golan.

Mr. Peres was asked by Maariv daily: "We want to return to the Syria issue. Do you have any doubt Mr. Peres that to the extent the conditions are fulfilled — regional peace, normalisation, etc. — that Israel has to pay what is called the full price?"

Mr. Peres replied: "I have no doubt. Because I think that without that there will never be peace."

"Referring to Israel's 1979 peace treaty with Egypt in

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His Majesty King Hussein on Friday visits Aqaba Municipality

King briefed on Aqaba measures to deal with earthquake situations

AQABA (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday paid a visit to Aqaba Municipality where he was briefed by Aqaba Region Authority (ARA) President Faysal Khasawneh and Aqaba Mayor Riyadh Hilou on impact of the earthquake that hit Aqaba on Nov. 22 and aftershocks.

The King also listened to a briefing on the precautionary measures taken to reduce effects of the aftershocks and

to educate people on how to deal with quake situations.

Mr. Khasawneh and Mr. Hilou said the authorities had started implementing a civil defence emergency plan which had been worked out in 1992.

King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah Ben Al Hussein and senior government officials from Aqaba, toured residential areas which have been slightly affected by the

earthquake and aftershocks.

The King met with citizens and enquired after their conditions.

At the end of the tour, the King gave instructions to the officials in Aqaba to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of and to provide help for people.

King Hussein, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor and Prince Hamzah, also visited the SOS Children's Village in Aqaba.

European common currency named 'euro'

MADRID (AP) — Holding firm in the face of doubt, West European leaders on Friday named their future single currency and approved a blueprint for introducing the "euro" by 2002.

"On the euro we are going to build the future of European integration," Spanish Finance Minister Pedro Solbes said in announcing the decision.

He also said the 15 European Union (EU) leaders, opening a two-day summit, agreed to phase in the new currency over three years, starting in 1999.

Mr. Solbes said the decision left "no doubts" that the currency would be introduced on schedule.

Concern has mounted in recent months that the timetable leaves too little time for many EU nations to put their finances in order to meet strict economic criteria required for joining the currency union.

Most EU nations — including major partners like France, Italy and Spain — are likely to have trouble meeting standards on low inflation, public debt and budget deficits.

In France, President Jacques Chirac's proposals to cut public spending to meet the economic standards have led to the worst civil unrest there in 27 years.

In an optimistic report last month, the EU's head office estimated that eight EU nations would qualify by 1999. But that included two — Britain and Denmark — that have the right to opt out of the currency plan. Nations falling short of the criteria could join the currency union later.

Settling a dispute between France and its partners, the leaders decided they will choose which nations meet the criteria as early as possible in 1998, based on 1997 economic data.

France had wanted to make the decision in late 1997 to avoid legislative elections scheduled for March 1998 turning into a referendum on the currency plan. The choice of "euro" was a compromise that inspired little enthusiasm but ended months of bickering over what to call the new coins and bills.

Officials said Mr. Chirac sought to block the choice of "euro" as a name for the currency but was overruled. "I think frankly it is a fairly unimaginative name," said British Prime Minister John Major.

But EU Finance Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy welcomed the agreement, saying the EU executive body can now launch a campaign to win popular

ing, Mubarak discuss peace efforts

AMMAN (AFP) — King Hussein has discussed Middle East peace efforts with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, an official said Friday. They spoke late Thursday by telephone as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher began a shuttle between Syria and Israel in an effort to revive the peace talks between the two countries. King Hussein and Mubarak viewed the latest developments in peace efforts and issues of mutual concern both the Arab and international arenas," the source said. Mr. Christopher is to visit Jordan and Egypt during his regional tour.

e Charette to visit Israel next week

PARIS (AFP) — French Foreign Minister Herve Charette will visit Israel and Palestinian territories between Dec. 21 and 23 for talks on the peace process in the region, a ministry spokesman said. Mr. De Charette will meet Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Also on the agenda is a conference on economic aid to Palestinians scheduled for 9 p.m. in Paris. Mr. De Charette was originally scheduled to visit Syria and Lebanon before the end of December, but these visits have been postponed, the ministry said. Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam is to arrive Monday in Amman for an official four-day visit.

N. waives unpaid African dues

NITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. General Assembly decided exceptionally Friday to cancel nearly \$94 million in unpaid dues accumulated by South Africa over 20 years. For its part, South Africa announced it would make a voluntary contribution to U.N. peacekeeping operations in Africa to help support the financially ailing body. The amount was not disclosed. A resolution adopted Friday noted the "exceptional circumstances" surrounding the reintegration of South Africa into the general Assembly in 1994 after a 20-year absence because of its apartheid policies. It said the assembly had taken a "moral and political decision" to exclude South Africa from its contributions for the period from 30 September 1974 to 23 June 1994, the solution said.

Arafat launches presidential campaign in Nablus speech

Israel delays Bethlehem pullout by 3 days

Combined agency dispatches

NABLUS (Agencies) — Yasser Arafat had himself nominated for president by acclamation from thousands of Palestinians Friday after receiving a hero's welcome in this West Bank town from which Israeli troops withdrew earlier this week.

Standing on the rooftop of the former Israeli military headquarters, Mr. Arafat asked the crowd in the square below: "From liberated Nablus, will you allow me to nominate myself?"

"We pledge our allegiance to you," came the response in unison from thousands of Palestinians who clapped, whistled and waved Palestinian flags.

Mr. Arafat then burst into the familiar chant of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, "with our soul and our blood, we will redeem you, oh Palestine."

The campaign for the Jan. 20 Palestinian general elections began Thursday with the first candidates putting forward their names. Palestinians have two votes, one for members of the 82-seat autonomy council that will administer the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and one for

president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Mr. Arafat is seeking the presidency, and was expected to formally register himself later Friday. Registration ends Dec. 22.

Later in the day, Mr. Arafat chaired a meeting of the PNA cabinet.

Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath said the cabinet was discussing the final resolutions to Mr. Arafat in line with the Palestinian election law.

Dr. Shaath said the issue of 5,000 Palestinian prisoners still in Israeli jails would also be raised and called for their release before the elections, noting that Israel has agreed to free 1,000 of them soon.

The cabinet normally meets in the Gaza Strip but held a session in Jenin after it gained self-rule in November.

Israel withdrew its troops from Nablus on Tuesday, 24 hours ahead of schedule, throwing the town's 130,000 Palestinians into joyous celebrations.

At least two other candidates, a woman founder of a charity and a businessman, plan to challenge Mr. Arafat.

but analysts do not expect either of them to present a serious threat.

His Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is also expected to win a majority of seats under the first past the post voting system.

Mr. Arafat landed in an Egyptian military helicopter at the town on Friday morning to begin official celebrations marking the town's freedom from 28 years of Israeli occupation.

Palestinian women ululated and men cheered and whistled as Mr. Arafat and his entourage emerged from the helicopter.

"From here ... with all you people of the mountain of fire, I declare Nablus liberated city," the PLO leader said.

Some 200 years ago Nablus acquired the nickname "mountain of fire" for the blazes its people set to stave off Napoleon Bonaparte's invading French army.

Early this century Nablus spearheaded resistance to British mandatory rule. And under Israeli occupation it

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Israel keeps Jordanians away from celebrations in Nablus

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — More than 500 Jordanians including a former prime minister, about 20 members of Parliament, politicians, journalists and independent personalities yesterday had to abandon a visit to the West Bank where they wanted to join celebrations in Nablus marking the Israeli withdrawal from the town due to inexplicable and unjustifiable behaviours by the Israeli authorities "managing the crossing point to the West Bank."

Former Prime Minister Taher Al Masri, coordinator of the visit from Amman which was arranged by the municipality of Nablus, said the group had permission to enter the West Bank and that he could not understand why the group was kept waiting at the King Hussein Bridge for more than two hours, well past the time the main celebrations in Nablus got under way.

The former prime minister, who hails from one of the most prominent families in Nablus, said he had forwarded the names of "550 prominent Jordanians from all walks of life who wanted to visit Nablus" to the municipality of the town and that

the mayor of the town, Ghassan Shakaa, had informed him that "the Israelis had approved most of the names and that we had initial approval" for the group minus a few persons whose entry was rejected by Israel.

But, when the group turned up at the King Hussein Bridge Friday morning, the Israeli authorities "procrastinated and kept the group waiting" and prompting Mr. Masri to announce that the visit was cancelled, according to members of the group.

Even by the time the hoisting of the Palestinian flag (in Nablus), the key event that the group wanted to attend, and the main part of the celebrations attended by Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat were over, the Israeli authorities had not said the group could enter the West Bank, said the participants, whose majority were Jordanians originally from Nablus and its environs.

No immediate Israeli comment was available.

"It was not as it was a sudden decision not to allow the group" into the West Bank, said Mr. Masri. However, he said, "something happened between the time the initial approval was issued" and Friday. "I'm not

yet aware what was precisely the problem," he said.

According to a senior Jordanian participant, who is a member of parliament, the best plausible explanation to the Israeli "procrastination" with the group was that the Jewish state wanted its withdrawal from the West Bank kept at a low key and did not want a high-profile visit by a large Jordanian group to Nablus covered by the media.

Other theories included one that said Mr. Arafat himself was not exactly very enthusiastic about the idea and some of his aides who had coordinated with the group had deliberately messed up the documentation and procedures related to the visit of the Jordanians.

"Arafat might have perceived the presence of the Jordanian-Palestinian contingent as an impending sign of another Jericho conference," a participant said, referring to the 1950 meeting by West Bank leaders in which they called for unity with Jordan.

"He (the PLO chairman) might have felt threatened by the participation of the Jordanians (of Nabulsi origin) that he found a way to hamper their arrival." But an

(Continued on page 7)

Combined agency dispatches

THE NORTH Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on Friday approved Operation Concerted Effort to send a massive peacekeeping force to Bosnia, and expected a U.N. resolution paving the way for full deployment, a senior NATO official said.

"Everything's been decided and approved, the operational plan, the rules of engagement and the order in which troops will be put on active duty," the official said after the council of ambassadors from the 16 member-states met in Brussels.

The U.N. Security Council in New York was to vote later Friday on a resolution authorising the deployment of the NATO-led multinational peace Implementation Force (IFOR).

A draft resolution was submitted to the United Nations by members of the enlarged "contact group" on the former Yugoslavia within hours of the peace treaty being signed in Paris Thursday.

"The alliance's 16 members were in total agreement on the different questions which remained to be settled, we are ready and it now needs only a U.N. resolution for NATO to press the button," the official said after the Brussels meeting.

He said NATO's envoys would meet again once the U.N. Security Council passed the resolution, to finalise the operation launch.

"NATO will then immediately begin to deploy its force of around 60,000 men," the official said, a deployment which according to military sources, will take at least two months, because of the sheer amount of equipment and the harsh winter gripping Bosnia's mountain regions.

U.N. Protection Force officers are due to formally hand over power to NATO four days after the launch of the operation, probably Monday or Tuesday.

Earlier Friday, NATO ambassadors held an informal meeting with representatives of 16 non-alliance countries to discuss the role of NATO's partners in the peace implementation force.

Russia's ambassador to Belgium, Vitaly Churkin, did not attend the meeting but was represented by an official.

The other countries represented were Austria, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Hungary,

Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and Ukraine.

With their peace treaty signed, Bosnia's former warring parties get back to detailed negotiations on Monday when an international conference in Bonn tackles the problem of cutting back their deadly arsenals.

The conference hopes to prevent a renewed outbreak of war by having Bosnia's Croats, Muslims and Serbs reveal military secrets like the number and location of their heavy weapons, sites of arms factories and plans for military training.

It also seeks to commit neighbouring Serbia and Croatia to arms quotas.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on Friday ordered the state of war to be lifted all over the self-proclaimed Serb republic in Bosnia, with the exception of the parts of Sarajevo due to be returned to Bosnian government control, the agency SRNA reported.

A state of war, implying martial law and a general mobilisation, was declared on July 28 over all Serb-controlled territory in Bosnia.

Prior to that, a "state of risk of imminent war" had been in force since the conflict started in 1992.

The status of Sarajevo's Serb-controlled districts will be defined "later in cooperation with the municipal council for these areas," the agency said.

Under the peace accord signed Thursday in Paris, all of Sarajevo will be administered by the Muslim-Croat federation.

Senior IFOR commanders were to meet with their counterparts from Bosnia's three fighting forces, NATO officials said.

Major General Mike Willcocks, chief of staff of the IFOR's headquarters, was to meet top commanders from the Bosnian government army, the Bosnian Serb army and a senior officer of the HVO, the Bosnian Croat forces in the republic, at Sarajevo's airport.

Gen. Willcocks will meet the senior Bosnian officers "to brief the representatives on the IFOR deployment, to discuss liaison arrangements and to emphasise the immediate actions required of all parties by the (Dayton) peace agreement," a NATO statement said.

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman meanwhile confirmed he had rejected Belgrade's conditions, including territorial exchange, for mutual recognition between his country and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

Mr. Tudjman told a press conference in Zagreb that the FRY — Serbia and Montenegro — had made an unacceptable proposal for territorial exchange.

(Continued on page 7)

Advertisement

On the occasion of its Thirty Second anniversary, Royal Jordanian Airline, has the pleasure to announce the introduction of a new service to facilitate the check-in process for passengers. Effective December 15th, 1995 passengers travelling to Amsterdam, New York, Chicago, London and Berlin will have the choice of obtaining their Boarding Pass as well as paying airport departure tax at our sales office located in Housing Bank, Commercial Centre. This service will be extended to other sales offices at a later stage.

ROYAL JORDANIAN

Setting New Standards

Ankara rejects PKK ceasefire, suggests Ocalan's surrender

ANKARA (Agencies) — Turkey's Interior Minister Teoman Unusan flatly rejected a ceasefire offer by the Kurdish rebel leader Thursday and said government troops would continue to hunt down the rebels. Mr. Unusan called on the head of outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan, to "surrender to the Turkish republic" after the PKK announced a ceasefire in its struggle with Turkish security forces for a separate homeland in the country's south-east.

"The best thing that Ocalan and his misguided men in the mountains can do is to surrender to the Turkish republic," Mr. Unusan told AFP.

"The PKK is an international terrorist organisation," Mr. Unusan said. "It is not just Turkey but other European countries as well which consider it as terrorist."

Announcing the start of a unilateral ceasefire, Mr. Ocalan warned guerrillas would fight back if attacked.

"As long as the security forces do not attack us, we will not attack anyone. The ceasefire will be under this condition," Mr. Ocalan said in comments broadcast on Med-TV, a Kurdish station licensed in London and broadcast via satellite.

Mr. Ocalan, whose PKK is fighting an 11-year-old war for control of the mainly Kurdish south-east, said the ceasefire would take effect on Friday, more than 18,000 people have died in the insurgency.

Turkey has in the past rejected PKK proposals for a joint ceasefire, saying it would not deal with "terrorists." Earlier in the week an official said Ankara did not take seriously Mr. Ocalan's calls for a ceasefire before Dec. 24 general elections.

"It's out of the question that the state should sit round a table with a terrorist organisation to discuss a ceasefire," Mr. Unusan said.

Afghans in Pakistan allege police abuse

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Burhanuddin came to Pakistan seeking refuge from his war-ravaged country Afghanistan. What he got was arrested by police who stormed his tiny apartment by night's cover.

He languished in a filthy prison cell until his family paid \$1,400 — a small fortune for an Afghan refugee family — to win his release.

Although not formally charged with any offence, the young Afghan's crime, according to a report released Wednesday by an Afghan aid group, was being the wrong nationality in the wrong place.

Burhanuddin, who was identified by one name, then returned to the war-ravaged Afghan capital, Kabul.

According to the authors of the report the harassment began following a suicide bombing on Nov. 19 that devastated the Egyptian embassy and killed 17 people.

The authorities say they have arrested several Egyptians in connection with the bombing. But initially police arrested scores of foreigners, including Afghans, who were in Pakistan without proper documents.

Since the bombing hun-

fire, either to accept or reject it," said Mr. Unusan, the minister.

"We are not taking this announcement seriously. He is only speaking for himself," Mr. Unusan said of the rebel leader. The government would not enter into talks with "a murderous organisation with kills people and traffics in drugs and arms," he added.

Mr. Ocalan said Thursday the length of the PKK truce would depend on the attitude of the Turkish government following the Dec. 24 elections. He has called for talks on a political solution to the Kurdish problem.

The rebel leader warned that the ceasefire offer should not be interpreted as a sign of PKK military weakness but rather as evidence of its intention to open a dialogue.

But Mr. Unusan maintained that the rebels had been "driven" to sue for peace by relentless pursuit of the Turkish army, actions by foreign governments, and the harsh winter conditions in southeastern Anatolia, where the PKK had "lost the sympathy" of the local population.

"The operations of the forces of order will continue as they are continuing to commit crimes," Mr. Unusan said. "They are in a very bad situation."

The PKK began a savage civil war in 1984 to establish an independent Kurdish homeland in the Kurdish-majority southeastern Anatolia, which borders Syria, Iraq and Iran.

It claims to represent between eight and 12 million Kurds in Turkey, out of a population of more than 60 million Turks.

A previous unilateral ceasefire announced by Mr. Ocalan, known as Apo — in the spring of 1993 — was also rejected by Ankara, whose army continued to flush out the rebels.



ARAFAT IN NABLUS: Surrounded by heavy security, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat is greeted upon his arrival in Nablus on Friday, three days after the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took over the West Bank town (see page one) (AFP photo)

U.S. is optimistic over Syria and Israel

TUNIS (USIA) — The United States is "optimistic about the coming phase of negotiations in the Middle East (the resumption of talks between Syria and Israel)," says Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Robert H. Pelletreau.

During a press conference here Dec. 14, Mr. Pelletreau said: "We're optimistic because there are many indications that Syria and Israel are ready to reactivate negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track."

"We have received these indications directly from President Assad, and from the Prime Minister of Israel, each of whom has indicated to us the interest of his country in pursuing negotiations for a comprehensive agreement."

Mr. Pelletreau said the U.S. is "determined to do all we can to facilitate a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. A comprehensive peace requires peace between Israel and Syria, and we will miss no opportunity, the secretary of state will miss no opportunity, to do everything he can to try to make those negotiations and that peace a reality."

"Of course, in the final analysis, both the pace of negotiations and the terms of the negotiations must be for the two parties to decide, but there is no higher priority for the United States than to help achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East," Mr. Pelletreau said.

Mr. Pelletreau also addressed the question of Jerusalem, saying: "The Palestinians and Israel have decided, as part of their declaration of principles, that the question of Jerusalem, being a very sensitive question, was one that they would leave until permanent status negotiations began."

"The United States respects that agreement by the two parties, and we do not feel it would be appropriate for us to do anything or to say anything that would have a tendency either to undermine or to affect the agreement which those parties have reached themselves."

Isolation cell is being set up for confessed Rabin assassin

TEL AVIV (AP) — A heavily guarded isolation cell in a desert prison is being prepared for Yitzhak Rabin's assassin to make sure he is not harmed by other inmates, officials said Thursday.

Confessed gunman Yigal Amir, 25, will serve his term at the Ohale Kedar prison on the outskirts of the town of Beersheba in the southern desert, if convicted, said prison authority spokesman Moshe Malul.

Amir's trial begins Tuesday. He faces a life sentence for the Nov. 4 assassination of Mr. Rabin after a peace rally in Tel Aviv.

The prison authority has asked officials at Ohale Kedar to install monitoring devices, additional gates and video cameras around a secluded cell for Amir, Malul said.

"He'll be kept in isolation. It's reasonable to assume he may be attacked if he is not kept alone," Malul said.

Israeli dailies said that other inmates have threatened Amir. The reports said Amir's cell has a shower and an adjoining room where he will be able to receive visitors. The cell also has its own yard so he will not have contact with other inmates.

Amir is currently being

held by the Shin Bet security service.

Also Thursday, a right-wing leader, Rabbi Benny Elon, told an official commission of inquiry into Rabin's killing that Amir was close friends with an alleged Shin Bet informant, Avishai Raviv.

Amir and Raviv met at Bar Ilan University, where Amir studied law, Elon said. They became close friends and organized activities in support of Jewish settlements, such as weekends in settlements for Bar Ilan students, the rabbi told the panel.

Elon speculated that Amir may have known about Raviv's Shin Bet connections and intentionally solicited funds from Raviv to make the authorities pay for his anti-government protests. Elon provided no proof for his allegations.

Raviv has denied he is a government informer. He testified before the commission later Thursday, but the session was closed to the public.

Israel radio reported Thursday that one of the suspects in the case asked a rabbi if the prime minister should be treated like a "persecutor" and was told "not like a persecutor, like a 'moser' (one who hands

over Jews to their enemies). Margalit Har-Shefi, who is suspected of complicity, refused to disclose the name of the rabbi.

Yigal Amir told police he decided to murder the premier, rather than just threatening him, "to do something effective and shocking," the radio reported.

Israel radio said Friday Amir told interrogators that at one point he planned to blind the prime minister with a firebomb launched from a model airplane.

Amir also plotted to kill two dovish cabinet ministers, Shulamit Aloni and Yossi Sarid from the Meretz Party, the report said.

The schemes were among several Amir thought up, but did not carry out, the radio said, quoting the interrogation transcript.

Amir has confessed to four attempts on Mr. Rabin's life before Nov. 4. Police believe that several suspects, including Amir's brother, Hagai, knew of Amir's prior attempts to kill Mr. Rabin.

Har-Shefi, who studied law at Bar Ilan University along with Amir, told interrogators Amir asked her to get rabbinical approval to kill Rabin, the daily Yediot Aharonot said Friday.

Arms were to be used to 'destabilise Kuwait'

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — An arms cache seized in Kuwait last weekend was to be used in a plot to destabilise the country and surrounding nations, Defence Minister Sheikh Ahmad Hamud Al Sabah said Friday.

"The weapons seized at a farm in Wafra," in the south west, "were part of a plan to harm security and propagate instability," Sheikh Ahmad, cited by the official news agency KUNA, said.

"The group," that had hidden the weapons "sought evil for Kuwait and the countries of the region," he added, without naming any organisation or person.

"God only knows what

would have happened if those weapons had been used to achieve their objective."

He said the weapons and ammunition were carefully hidden and works was continuing to take them away.

The Kuwaiti authorities announced the seizure on December 9 and said the weapons, hidden underground in a farm owned by a Kuwaiti, were intended for sale.

The authorities said the arms were part of equipment left by Iraqi troops who occupied Kuwait from August 1990 to February 1991.

The government has repeatedly called on Kuwaitis to hand over weapons they find.

Moroccan Islamic leader freed from house arrest

RABAT (AFP) — Morocco on Thursday lifted a six-year house arrest order imposed on Abdellah Yassine, an Islamic leader and critic of the regime of King Hassan II, at Sale, near here.

Two AFP correspondents met with the 67-year leader of the underground Islamic Al Adal wa Al Hissan Association at his home without police overseeing the meeting.

Police previously barred visitors from getting near Yassine's home, where he has been confined since December 1989.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Moroccan king's top-adviser dies

RABAT (R) — Morocco on Thursday announced that Ahmad Reda Guedira, who had been King Hassan's senior political counsellor since 1972, has died in Paris. Guedira, 73, died at the Hotel Dieu Hospital where he was admitted in September, the officials news agency MAP said. He has been described as the monarch's "eminence grise" and the prime minister of the "inner circle government" composed of the king's closest political, military and civil advisers collectively known as the royal cabinet. He was an independent politician, although he tried several times to set up a political party of his own that could challenge the dominance of the old-guard Istiqlal Party and its radical offshoot the Socialist Union of People's Forces. Appointed interior minister in 1961, Guedira helped draft the first constitution and organised the first legislative elections, held in 1963. He was successively minister of agriculture, foreign affairs, planning and education. He is expected to be buried in Morocco. MAP said.

Japan approves mission to Golan Heights

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese government approved plans Friday for more than 100 military personnel to take part in United Nations peacekeeping activities on the Golan Heights from early next year, officials said. Under the plan, 45 personnel will join the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in 1967. Two Self-Defence Force officers will work in the UNDOF headquarters while a 43-member army contingent will be responsible for transporting food and other supplies, building roads and taking care of storehouses. The army unit includes 29 troops taking over the duties of a departing Canadian unit. Japan will also send a total of 60 air force personnel for logistic support as well as six civilian government officials to work as liaison personnel. The air force personnel will fly two C-130 transport planes to carry supplies for the Japanese mission which starts in February, an official said. Japan decided in August to take part in the U.N. mission for two years.

Bomb explodes at Turkish party office

ISTANBUL (R) — A bomb exploded at an Istanbul office of Turkey's Islamist party on Friday but there were no casualties in the latest violence ahead of December 24 general elections, Anatolian news agency said. The blast at the Welfare Party office in the working class district of Gaziosmanpasa slightly damaged nearby buildings, it said. No group immediately took responsibility for the bomb. Gunmen raked an office of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) in the same district on Monday. One teenager died and six people were wounded in that attack. About 17 people were killed in March riots in Gaziosmanpasa, sparked by a drive-by shooting at a cafe frequented by members of the liberal Alevis branch of Islam. Unknown attackers threw petrol bombs at Welfare and Republican People's Party (CHP) offices in Istanbul on Thursday. A Kurdish party has accused pro-state militia-men of shooting and wounding two of its supporters at an election rally in southeast Turkey but Turkish officials deny there were any injuries in the incident.

Prison mutiny contained in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Some 100 inmates were still holed up in a section of an Istanbul jail Friday but authorities said the mutiny by far-left militants was being contained by security forces. Twelve members of the security forces and 36 detainees were injured in the disturbances by suspected members of the People's Liberation Revolutionary Party (the new name of the underground Dev-Sol party), according to the latest official toll. Firearms were not used during the clashes, authorities said, without specifying the nature of the injuries. Most of those who had been hurt suffered from respiratory trouble caused by the tear gas used to put down the revolt, hospital sources said Thursday. A justice ministry official said in a communique that security forces were not planning to dislodge the mutineers who have set up barricades in a section of the Umraniye jail. The mutiny began after prison authorities refused to consider a series of unspecified demands by the inmates. Stringent security measures were immediately taken. In September three inmates were killed and 42 wounded when security forces put down a revolt by ultra-leftist militants in Buca prison near the western city of Izmir. Fifteen members of the security forces were also hurt during the clashes.

Lebanon, Malaysia to open air link

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's national carrier Middle East Airlines (MEA) and Malaysian Airways have signed an agreement to set up a twice weekly service between Beirut and Kuala Lumpur from January. MEA said. The agreement was signed here Thursday by the chief executives of the two companies, Khaled Salam of MEA and Dine Ramle of the Malaysian carrier.

Floods kill two in Iran, cause damage

NICOSIA (R) — Floods in southern Iran have killed two teenagers, cut off hundreds of villages and destroyed homes and farmland, Iran's IRNA news agency said on Friday. Floods triggered by torrential rains and bulging rivers killed two teenagers in Jahrom, 800 kilometers south of Tehran, IRNA said. In the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province bordering Pakistan, 3,000 hectares of paddy fields were destroyed, IRNA quoted a local official in the town of Nikshahr as saying. Floods had cut off 300 villages around Nikshahr and destroyed 332 houses, it said. Floods and heavy snow had also damaged parts of central and western Iran, the agency added.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Back to the Future
14:30 Harry and the Hendersons
15:00 Blue Heelers
15:30 Only in Hollywood
16:00 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:30 Sky Trackers
17:00 Children's Programme: Fractales
17:30 Magazine — Omnisciences
18:00 Drama — C'est Mon Histoire
19:00 The Journal
19:15 Magazine — Fau Pas Rever
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Major Dad
20:00 The First Flights
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:00 Star Trek
21:30 News in English
22:25 Feature Film: "Glory Days"
23:50 L'Histoire Secrete Du Petrole

PRAYER TIMES

06:01 Fajr
06:33 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:31 Dhuhr
14:51 'Asr
16:38 Maghreb
18:09 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swetish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 63785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terresanta Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 632826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775201
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 634328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Lutheran-Syrian Church Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Moderate weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 3 / 13
Aqaba 10 / 20
Deserts 2 / 14
Jordan Valley 10 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 12, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 60 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah 830425
Dr. Salman Al Daboubi 776751
Dr. Ramzi Mawad 894788
Dr. Khalid M'addi 743500
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Alquds pharmacy (-)
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985530
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 631111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 75121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 87467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power
Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Oceana Air Int'l. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussain Medical Centre 81381/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Ann. 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Ann. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Samaritani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 843845
Al-Mushter Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Oceana Air Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
IRBID:
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)980560
Al Hilma Modern Hospital (09)980990

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibo Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)341111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53300-5, where it should always be verified.

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:00 Aden (RJ)
06:25 Jakarta (RJ)

08:20 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:00 Aqaba (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
09:30 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
09:45 Beirut (RJ)
10:20 Colombo (RJ)
10:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
10:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:25 London, Berlin (RJ)
19:40 Vienna (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 Bahrain, Doha (GF)
15:00 Rome (AZ)
15:00 Vienna (OS)
18:10 Dubai (EK)
20:10 Beirut (RJ)
20:40 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:05 Larnaca (CY)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
22:45 Athens, Beirut (OA)
01:15 Amsterdam (BA)
01:15 London, Damascus (KL)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 Bahrain, Doha (GF)
15:00 Rome (AZ)
15:00 Vienna (OS)
18:10 Dubai (EK)
20:10 Beirut (RJ)
20:40 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:05 Larnaca (CY)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
22:45 Athens, Beirut (OA)
01:15 Amsterdam (BA)
01:15 London, Damascus (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700 / 500
Banana 680
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Banana (imported) 870/650
Cabbage 110 / 50
Carrot 300/200
Cauliflower 150 / 100
Cucumbers (large) 300 / 200
Cucumbers (small) 200 / 120
Eggplant 750/500
Garlic 230/150
Grape Fruit 230/150
Lemon 150 / 100
Marrow (large) 280 / 200
Marrow (small) 200/140
Onion (green) 200/140

Queen honours winners of children's competition

AMMAN (J.T.) — One hundred and forty two children, who won the 1995 Children's Creative Production Competition organised by the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation in cooperation with Nour Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), received prizes Thursday from Her Majesty Queen Noor at the Shoman Forum in Jabal Amman.

The competition featured the work of 2,199 children, between the ages of 6 and

16 years, in the fields of poetry, literature, drama, drawing, handicrafts and photography, a Royal Court statement said.

In his speech, Abdul Majeed Shoman thanked the children's "families, parents and schools for their care" and emphasised the importance of protecting and nurturing children's freedom of expression.

Queen Noor, who annually patronises the competition, praised the children's innovative creations and emphasised the importance

of expanding the support and participation of the private sector in national children's projects, the statement said.

The Creative Production Competition was established in 1989 by the NHF and the Shoman Foundation, which were subsequently joined by UNICEF in 1991.

The competition aims to "develop children's patriotism and national belonging, refine their literary skills as well as reveal and encourage/promote their

artistic talents and abilities." Queen Noor, accompanied by HRH Rajwa Ali, was received by members of the NHF Executive Committee, Senator Leila Sharaf, NHF Executive Director Ibrahim Badran, Mr. and Mrs. Khalid Shoman, Shoman Foundation General Director As'ad Abdul Rahman, Office Director Yusra Abu Ajamieh and Ayman Abu Laban of UNICEF.

Ministry to maintain food policies

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Supply will continue to import, subsidise and ensure sufficient supplies of basic foodstuffs for the local market, according to Ministry Secretary General Mustafa Khleifat.

The Ministry of Supply will not increase prices of basic commodities like wheat, flour, sugar, rice, powdered milk and animal feed which it imports for the country, Mr. Khleifat said at a press conference Friday.

He said the ministry

intends to continue distributing food coupons for 1996. Food coupons are distributed to families whose monthly income does not exceed JD 500, and according to Mr. Khleifat 81 per cent of the 1996 coupons have already been handed out.

Mr. Khleifat also urged the public to avoid wasting subsidised foodstuffs and said a recent ministry survey revealed that 25 per cent is thrown away. Mr. Khleifat said the wasted amount is estimated at 150,000 tonnes annually,

making it worth \$35 million.

Mr. Khleifat said the price of a tonne of wheat rose this year from \$130 to \$234 in the international markets, while rice rose from \$306 to \$375 a tonne and sugar from \$355 to \$394. But, according to the secretary general, the ministry will retain the previous rates of these commodities for sale to consumers.

The increase in international prices is costing the state treasury an additional JD 88 million which could rise to JD 150 million next

year, Mr. Khleifat said.

He also said Jordan's wheat production barely covers eight per cent of the country's needs and that production remains poor despite incentives offered by the ministry to farmers.

In reply to a question on coffee prices, which have remained steady at JD 5 a kilogramme, despite a drop of nearly 50 per cent in its international market price, Mr. Khleifat said coffee merchants and the ministry will be holding a meeting on Monday to settle the issue.

Best of flamenco comes to Amman

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For more than six weeks now music lovers have been enjoying a series of concerts and recitals characterised by a rich variety of exceptionally beautiful music.

After refined Austrian jazz, soulful American jazz, and highly distinguished Spanish classical guitar, flamenco, at its purist is coming to the Amman stage.

Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor the embassy of Spain, in cooperation with the Cervantes Institute and with the sponsorship of Freddy for Music, is presenting the Spanish flamenco ballet "Blanca del Rey and Company."

Blanca del Rey is a prodigy artist who, as a dancer, was already winning awards at the age of six.

The rest of her biography and success story could easily fill an encyclopaedic-size computer CD-ROM disc.

Indeed, her accomplishments, the number of prestigious festivals she has participated in, the heads of state for whom she has performed—King Hussein in



Blanca del Rey

1987—and her famous ballet creations represents a unique track record in terms of both quality and quantity.

The New York Times writes: "Blanca del Rey lives up to her name: she reigns," and the Correio

Braziliense adds "Blanca del Rey: the most important flamenco dancer of all time." The troupe of 14 dancers, singers and virtuoso flamenco guitarists will perform tonight at the Prince Hassan Auditorium, at the University of Jordan.

German team to meet with human rights activists

AMMAN (J.T.) — A visiting six-member German parliamentary delegation will hold talks with Lawyer Asma Khader and human rights activists, according to an official at the German embassy in Amman Friday.

The official said the delegation members, who met with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent and speakers of Parliament Thursday, will be discussing human rights issues and democracy, but will not hold further meetings with government officials.

The Crown Prince reviewed developments in

the peace process with the German Delegation, and reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to pursuing peace efforts towards comprehensive economic development in an atmosphere marked by democracy, political pluralism, peace and respect of human rights, according to Saeed Hayel Srou, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament who attended the meeting.

Mr. Srou said the Crown Prince called on European parliamentarians to play an effective role in terminating 'Islamophobia' among Europeans.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by artist Hind Nasser at Darat Al Furun (until Jan. 6).
* Photography by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah entitled "The Autobiography of an Eye" at Darat Al Furun, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Jan. 4).

CHRISTMAS SALE

* Gifts and crafts by Suha Lallas Kassissieh at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra Rd (until Dec. 31).

Journalists, academics discuss ways to upgrade media standards

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The popular discussion of the state of journalism in Jordan continues this week, with journalists and academicians agreeing that much needs to be done soon.

At a seminar organised by the International and Islamic Centre for Information and Studies, the role of newspapers in setting a standard for professional journalism was discussed by the two parties.

While both groups lashed out at sensational newspapers, adding that their expectations from these publications in contributing to the upgrading of the profession was minimal, they blamed the government and the daily press for the existence of sensational media.

From the academic side, Mohammed Shreideh, a lecturer of journalism at Yarmouk University, accused well-established newspapers as "lacking in courage" in addressing issues that are of importance to the public.

Therefore, he said people tend to read sensational,

unprofessional newspapers to make up for the information they need.

When it came to discussing what they saw as the government's contribution to the increasing numbers of sensational papers, Arafat Hijazi, a former president of the Jordanian Press Association (JPA) accused the government of breaking the Press and Publications Law, which he described as efficient.

"The law states clearly that newspapers should comply with the specifics of the license," Mr. Hijazi said.

Mr. Hijazi interprets the law as stipulating that newspapers must fall into one specific category such as political or social. But according to Mr. Hijazi, the government grants the same newspapers two specialisations and "that is against the law."

Mr. Hijazi sees the government as promoting a large number of people as journalists in newspapers when they are not actually professional journalists.

"They are not members in the JPA union, but the government protects them by

issuing them press cards from the Press and Publication Department," Mr. Hijazi said.

The seminar participants agreed that Jordan's established newspapers were contributing little to making reporting more professional. Rather than training journalists, these newspapers, they said, were just interested in making profit.

The academicians stressed their willingness to contribute to the upgrading of journalism by offering lectures, on, for example, investigative reporting, which according to them, is lacking in the Jordanian press.

"If the present situation continues, I do not expect much improvement in the profession," said Mohammed Shreideh, a teacher of journalism at Yarmouk University and also the founder of Al Ansar political party.

The seminar was part of a series of discussions held at the International and Islamic Centre for Information Studies to prepare for a two-day conference on the media in Jordan to be held in April next year, according to Bilal Tal, president of the centre.

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Financial Controller
Director of Food & Beverage
Asst. Dir. of Food & Beverage
Executive Chef
Executive Sous Chef
Banqueting Manager
Purchasing Manager

Director of Human Resources
Training Manager
Director of Rooms
Front Office Manager
Housekeeping Manager
Laundry Manager
Director of Engineering
EDP Manager

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Alain Schauder
Director of Human Resources, Europe, Africa, Middle East
Hyatt International Europe, Africa, Middle East
Case Postale 432, 1000 Lausanne 30
Switzerland

All selected candidates will be interviewed in Amman in the first quarter 1996. Only potential candidates will be contacted.



South Korea's top legal brain chosen as premier

SEOUL (R) — President Kim Young-Sam Friday appointed South Korea's top legal scholar as his new prime minister, underlining his efforts to promote the rule of law in a country rocked by a corruption scandal.

Lee Soo-Sung, a career academic and president of Seoul National University, the country's top learning institution, will replace Lee Hong-Koo after parliamentary approval, a presidential spokesman said.

He said the National Assembly was expected to give its approval Saturday. Replacing the prime minister was the first step in a sweeping cabinet reshuffle expected Saturday or Monday next week, the spokesman added.

"I think the existing feeling among the people is that all politicians are crooks and Mr. Kim is trying to send a message that this is a new era," said Lee Keun-

Mo, head of research at Barings Securities.

"The selection is aimed at achieving the great future-oriented task of correcting the country's history," said presidential spokesman Yoon Yeo-Joon.

On Monday ex-President Roh Tae-Woo and eight of the country's leading business tycoons are due to go on trial for corruption. Mr. Roh's predecessor Chun Doo Hwan is in detention and is also expected to be charged with corruption as well as military mutiny stemming from a 1979 coup.

Mr. Lee, 56, has spent most of his adult life at Seoul National, where he earned his first law degree, his master's degree and doctorate before rising through the faculty to become dean of the College of Law.

He was promoted to university president in March. Critics said Mr. Lee's lack of experience as an admin-

istrator and a politician could be a problem as he tackles the political crisis and leads the government into general elections next year.

The ruling party was drubbed in local elections this year and is believed to be heading for another electoral disaster.

"Lee is a rational person with a spectacular scholastic background, but I am worried about his ability to manoeuvre the political crisis," said Lee Hahn-Ku, president of Daewoo Research Institute.

Kwon Moo-Soo, dean of Kookmin University's Graduate School of Politics, said: "Lee is known only as a nerd who has spent his life in academia. But he has been an excellent civil activist who has contributed greatly to democratisation."

"He has always focused on virtue and cultivation of the mind," said Choi Jong-Go, a Seoul National law

professor.

Several members of the cabinet are expected to run for parliament next year and must first step down. This gives the president a chance to inject new blood into his team untainted by the scandals, analysts said.

Signalling President Kim's desire for a clean break with the past, the ruling Democratic Liberal Party has changed its name to the New Korea Party.

President Kim first asked Mr. Lee to lead his cabinet on Dec. 4, the presidential spokesman said. "But the announcement was delayed until today as Lee had persistently refused to take up the post."

Yonhap News Agency quoted Mr. Lee as saying: "I feel responsible all the more because of my lack of experience in administration."

"I accepted Kim's offer because it was discourteous and cowardly to turn it down," he added.



Chaplin's hat, cane sold for £44,750

LONDON (R) — The hat and cane that helped make Charlie Chaplin the star of silent comedy fetched £44,750 (\$68,720) at a British auction of film memorabilia Thursday. Chaplin's belongings, which were offered by a descendant of his half-brother Wheeler Dryden, were bought by a private Swiss Museum, said Christie's auction house. The Arab robes worn by Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence of Arabia* sold for £12,375 (\$19,000), well above estimates. But the first Oscar to be auctioned in Europe, awarded to Ethel Barrymore in 1944 for her performance in *None But The Lonely Heart*, failed to lure big buyers and was withdrawn. The gold-plated statuette, billed as the sale centre-piece, drew bids of £8,000 (\$12,280), half the estimated price. The photograph shows Emma Blaydon of Christie's showing Chaplin's hat and cane.

Japan cabinet approves \$250b defence programme

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's cabinet Friday formally approved a five-year, \$250 billion defence programme for the rest of the decade, which will include the deployment of 47 new FSX fighters developed with the United States.

Under the programme, Japan will spend 25.15 trillion Yen (\$250 billion) with an average annual growth rate of 2.1 per cent for the five years from next April. This will include new arms purchases of 4.3 trillion Yen.

The cabinet formally approved the plan Friday following agreement by the ruling coalition late Thursday.

Under the current five-year programme ending March, spending was fixed at 22.17 trillion Yen.

The 2.1 per cent growth rate is unchanged from the level in the current programme. However, under the new plan, up to 110 billion Yen can be spent additionally during the five-year period if necessary "to deal with unpredictable incidents, build confidence with neighbouring countries and take care of other new needs."

The new plan calls for the government to purchase 130 FSX next-generation support fighters, including

47 under the mid-term programme starting in April next year.

The \$120 million fighter, the most expensive model of its kind, is an improved version of the F-16 made by McDonnell Douglas Corp. The FSX is currently being tested.

The plan also calls for further studies on an advanced anti-missile system, known as the theatre missile defence system.

The defence spending programme did not commit to purchasing inflight-refuelling aircraft demanded by the Defence Agency, but it said the government will "consider" the introduction after more study.

The defence accord came after the conservative Liberal

Democratic Party (LDP) — the biggest member of the coalition which also includes the left-wing Social Democratic Party and the New Party Sakigake — gave up plans for 2.8 per cent growth expenditure.

A new long-term defence blueprint was adopted in late November. The parties must now overcome divisions over the defence budget for the coming year, which is to be finalised this month, with the rest of the national budget.

Japanese lawmakers to form new party

TOKYO (AFP) — Nine Japanese lawmakers, including the former chief of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), plan to form a new party in late December in a bid to create a new liberal force in the conservative dominated parliament, members said Friday.

The new party is expected to include Sadao Yamahana, former secretary-general of the SDP and former minister in charge of political reforms, the members said.

"We aim to create a bigger grouping of liberal democrats," Banri Kaieda, who currently heads the small Democratic New Party, told a news conference.

"We also want to play a role in organising existing local parties."

The planned new party will be formed by three members of Mr.

Kaieda's party and six SDP members, including Mr. Yamahana, who are expected to quit the SDP shortly to join the new party.

The SDP, led by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, also plans to form a new party in January after dissolving itself to challenge the two conservative forces — the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the opposition New Frontier Party.

But the SDP announced Friday that it would delay its dissolution date, which was scheduled for Jan. 19.

The announcement came only two weeks after the SDP gave up the original plan to form a new party by the end of the year after failing to win the support of the New Party Sakigake.

The smallest of the three parties in the ruling coalition.

Colombian leader cleared of corruption

BOGOTA (R) — Colombian President Ernesto Samper was cleared Thursday of wrongdoing in a drug-related campaign finance scandal but may face renewed corruption charges before his four-year mandate ends in 1998.

Drug corruption charges against the embattled president could be reopened at any time and Colombia's worst political crisis in decades is unlikely to end soon, analysts said.

"My innocence has been proven," declared Mr. Samper in a televised address to the nation.

"I hope the chance that I finally had to prove my innocence is given to other people who are actually facing their case..." said Mr. Samper.

He called on Congress to make the committee investigation public. "I invite all Colombians to get to know the details...so there is not a single shadow of doubt."

But analysts said Mr. Samper was not yet clear.

"I think certainly it is not the end of it," said Bernardo Vargas, country manager at the Bogota branch of ING Barings.

"The process keeps going on and there is a fair probability the president will be questioned again," he said.

A congressional committee announced that it had voted 14-to-1 to shelve a preliminary probe into charges that Mr. Samper personally authorised the receipt of \$6 million in Cali cartel drug money to win the election last year.

While the vote temporarily removed the threat of impeachment hanging over Mr. Samper since August, it did not mean he had been absolved, lawmakers said.

"It doesn't mean that he's innocent or guilty," Jorge Humberto Mantilla, deputy director of the Committee of Accusations of the House of Representatives, told reporters in announcing the ruling. He said the probe had been closed because there was not enough evidence to warrant a full-fledged investigation in Congress, but stressed that it would be reopened if new evidence surfaces.

Prosecutor-General Alfonso Valdivieso, an anti-drug crusader, is pressing ahead with his own, independent probe of the scandal that has already led to the arrests of Mr. Samper's three top campaign aides and new allegations could be made at any time.

The shelving of the case gave Mr. Samper a breathing spell and provided at least temporary relief for a country struggling under the weight of political uncertainty.

Opposition politicians called the ruling by the Committee of Accusations, which is dominated by Mr. Samper's Liberal Party, a whitewash even before it was announced and said they will continue demanding that the president step down.

The opposition is weak and divided, however, and even some of Mr. Samper's most outspoken critics concede that he has shown enormous staying power and an uncanny ability to roll with the punches amid coup rumours and reported death threats against him.

"You prick him and he doesn't bleed," one prominent critic, Senator Enrique Gomez, said of Mr. Samper, adding that the poorly 44-year-old president probably would have made an excellent prize-fighter.

Mr. Samper still carries four of the 11 bullets fired at him by gunmen at Bogota's airport in March 1989 as he stood talking to a left-wing political leader.

Barring any major new evidence implicating him in the so-called "narcogate" scandal, diplomats say he is likely to survive until his mandate ends.

Papers name Diana's 'new man'

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana, estranged wife of Britain's heir to the throne, Prince Charles, has a new man in her life, British tabloid newspapers said Friday. They reported the princess had begun the relationship with 40-year-old property developer Christopher Whalley by asking him to buy her a cup of coffee after a work-out at an exclusive gym club in London's fashionable Chelsea district.

"What does a girl have to do to get a guy to buy her a cup of coffee round here," the Sun newspaper quoted the princess as having asked Whalley. The Daily Mirror claimed the princess's relationship with six foot (1.83 metres) bachelor Whalley, who lives in London but also has a farmhouse in the northern English county of Yorkshire, has been going on for 14 months. It quoted a friend as saying of hazel-eyed, brown-haired Whalley: "Women love him. He is intelligent, articulate and a wonderful shoulder to cry on. When he is in love, he is intensely loyal. He is a real find."

The Mirror claimed a world exclusive for its story in its earlier provincial editions, but matching pieces were run by its rivals in papers circulating in London. However, the Sun quoted Mr. Whalley as denying he was closely involved with the princess. "I'm not one of her regular friends. So she's phoned me a couple of times — what's the big deal?" he was quoted as saying.

Madonna 'not obsessed with sex'

NEW YORK (R) — Madonna says people have the wrong idea about her — she's not obsessed with sex. The singer who turned sex into an industry with her provocative records, films and books, told ABC TV in an interview to be aired Wednesday night that she is not the "raving nymphomaniac" obsessed with sex and shocking people that the public seems to think. She added that after she finishes filming *Evita*, a biography of the late wife of Juan Peron, she will put ads in newspapers seeking someone to father her child. "Who knows who's gonna apply for, you know, the fatherhood gig?" she said.

Adulterers in unexpected encounter

SOFIA (R) — A married man and his lover who stole away to a holiday cottage for a romantic evening without their spouses made an unwelcome discovery next door. Hearing lively music in a nearby house, the lovers decided to take some wine and join the party. Inside, they found their own wife and husband locked in an adulterous embrace. Bulgaria's 24 Hours daily reported. The two unfaithful wives buried themselves at each other, screaming abuse. Their embarrassed husbands intervened when the women tried to attack each other with garden hoses. The two men accompanied their wives home to a chorus of spectators' cheers.

Britons nicer than reputed — Kuchma

LONDON (R) — Ukraine's president Leonid Kuchma said he was pleasantly surprised during a visit to London — the British were much nicer than their reputation suggested. "I hadn't expected Britons to be the way they are. From what I had read in literature and history, I perceived them as totally different people," Mr. Kuchma told reporters at the end of a two-day visit. "They're actually very friendly, open people."

Mr. Kuchma said meeting Queen Elizabeth II was his favourite part of the visit.

ASEAN unites to ban nuclear arms

BANGKOK (AFP) — Ten South East Asian nations divided by the cold war united here Friday to sign a treaty banning nuclear weapons from the region, but failed to enlist the immediate support of the big five powers.

The seven Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members were joined by Burma, Cambodia and Laos in forging the historic treaty forbidding the acquisition, development, use, testing and stationing of nuclear arms in their zone.

The treaty signing climaxed the fifth summit of ASEAN, which groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. They hope to admit the three other signatories by 2000.

A Bangkok declaration issued by the ASEAN urged nuclear powers Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States to back the treaty and implement "more vigorous measures to reduce and eliminate all nuclear weapons."

"ASEAN also calls upon these states to expediently conclude a credible and comprehensive test ban treaty in the interest of world peace," it added.

Thai Premier Banham Silpa-Archa said in a closing speech that ASEAN agreed to review a separate protocol, prepared for the five powers to sign, affirming support for a South East Asian nuclear weapons-free zone.

He said the treaty will "guard against the scourge of nuclear weapons in the region" and contribute toward global nuclear non-

proliferation.

There are no known nuclear weapons stationed in South East Asia but its vast waters are plied by naval vessels of nuclear powers cruising between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

U.S. forces quit the Philippines in 1992 but maintain bases in Japan and South Korea, while Russia has access to Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay until 2004.

The nuclear powers withheld support for the treaty pending clarification of what constitutes South East Asian territory, and the rights of foreign navies to pass through its waters and airspace, diplomats said.

France, whose nuclear tests in the South Pacific triggered ASEAN protests, was prepared to sign the protocol but "with reservations," diplomatic sources said.

China, also denounced for nuclear tests this year, was concerned about definitions of South East Asian territory since it has conflicting claims with some ASEAN members over the Spratly Islands, they said.

Earlier Friday, all 10 South East Asian states held a landmark summit in Bangkok's Oriental Hotel to map the course of future cooperation in the region.

Thai Premier Banham said an ASEAN expanded to 10 members would help "realise the vision of our founders" for one South East Asia, which was bitterly divided during the cold war.

He was joined by Brunei Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah, Indonesian President Suharto, Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohamad, Philippine

President Fidel Ramos, Singapore Premier Goh Chok Tong, and Vietnamese Premier Vo Van Kiet.

Cambodian Co-Premiers Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, Laotian Premier Khamtay Siphandone, and Burmese military junta leader General Than Shwe were also on hand. The presence of the Burmese chief here was denounced by human rights groups.

An estimated 500 demonstrators asking ASEAN leaders to pay more attention to the problems of the poor tied up traffic but failed to disrupt the talks when police turned them back at the approaches to the summit venue.

The 10-nation summit was held behind closed doors, with only the leaders present, assisted where necessary by interpreters.

The talks brought together countries which were enemies when ASEAN was formed 28 years ago and which are slowly moving toward political and economic cooperation.

Officials confirmed Friday that ASEAN members had agreed to hold an annual informal meeting, in between elaborate formal summits held every three years, to keep up with developments and engage in "brainstorming."

The informal summits could be expanded to include the three prospective ASEAN members as well as key trading partners China, Japan and South Korea, they said.

ASEAN was formed in 1967 as anti-Communist bulwark at the height of the Vietnam War, aimed at containing expansion of communism from Indochina.

Seoul again sounds alarm over North's aircraft

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea has deployed some 90 military aircraft in a forward movement that puts some 20 of its bombers just a five-minute flight from Seoul, South Korea's intelligence agency said here Friday.

The National Security Planning Agency told the National Assembly that North Korea in October redeployed 420 military aircraft, including bombers, transport planes, helicopters and jet fighters.

Military experts and top officials had mixed reactions to the report, the second alarm over the North's military aircraft movements within two weeks.

"There was no substantial enough shift to suggest anything greatly worrying or out of the ordinary," visiting U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency director, John Holm, told journalists here.

Mr. Holm was speaking after being briefed by top U.S. and South Korean military officers here.

But a presidential aide voiced worry.

"We are concerned that North Korea might feel time is running out for a showdown with the South because of its worsening economic situation and spreading famine," the aide told AFP.

"Next spring is the most dangerous period, and we are closely monitoring their (the North's military) movements," he added.

The agency said that of the total number of aircraft moved forward, more than 90 were redeployed in three reserve air bases which are located within 40 kilometres from the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

Twenty IL-28 bombers were included in the deployment from the northern city of Uiju to Taetan, in a move that would reduce their flight time from Seoul from 30 to five minutes.

Some 70 old MiG-17s were also confirmed to have been involved in the forward move, putting them six minutes' flying time from the South Korean capital.

The agency also said the North's one-million-member army had a newly-formed corps of four light infantry brigades stationed near the DMZ, and that its war food stockpiles could sustain a three-month-long campaign.

Global AIDS conference on Africa ends without fresh hope

KAMPALA (R) — A global meeting of scientists and researchers on AIDS ended in Uganda with a grim assessment of the failure so far to find a cure or vaccine.

"There was still no dramatic breakthrough for the ultimate cure. Progress on vaccine development remains slow and frustrating," conference Chairman Sam Okware told the more than 3,500 delegates in Kampala.

"Moreover the disease continues to spread to new areas, with sub-Saharan Africa the hardest hit," he added.

In a harsh reminder of the problem at hand, a Cameroonian delegate, 33-year-old Jean-Francoise Mezol, died of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) in a hospital on the outskirts of Kampala, the conference venue.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)-sponsored ninth International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Africa was

reminded of the need for preventive measures against the disease, which is ravaging the world but mostly poor communities.

The scientists met for five days to appraise progress of research into a possible cure or vaccine for the fatal disease which destroys the body's immune system.

With no advance on that front, delegates resolved to step up educational campaigns and increase the availability of condoms, the best known way short of sexual abstinence for avoiding AIDS.

The highlight of the meeting was an announcement by American researcher Phyllis Kanki that studies in West Africa had shown a strain of the virus weakening in potency over time, enabling sufferers to live longer.

Because of extreme poverty that ensures even the most rudimentary health services are out of the reach of most, AIDS has spread most rapidly in Africa.

Some 11 million adults

and one million children with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS — nearly two thirds of the world's recorded cases — are in Africa, according to WHO figures which account for only a fraction of actual cases.

WHO estimates that more than 4.5 million people the world over have developed AIDS and says the figure could triple by the year 2000.

The meeting, which attracted leading scientists such as Luc Montagnier who first isolated the virus that causes AIDS and was attended by WHO Director-General Hiroshi Nakajima, was addressed on its last day by the U.S. President's advisor on HIV and AIDS.

Patsy Flemming told the mostly-African delegates despite increasing pressure to cut the U.S. aid budget, President Bill Clinton would not slash aid aimed at checking the spread of the disease on the world's neediest continent.



Russian soldiers block the road going to the town of Gudermes where a group of Chechen rebels attacked a Russian military base (AFP photo)

Yeltsin warns against return to past ahead of poll

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin took a last-minute plunge into Russia's parliamentary election campaign Friday and urged the nation not to allow "forces of the past" to come to power in Sunday's poll.

The most dangerous thing is that representatives of some parties want to turn the country to the past," read the text of Mr. Yeltsin's speech, to be telecast later Friday and distributed in advance by his press service.

"This is a tragic mistake," Mr. Yeltsin's speech made clear he was making an hour attempt to prevent the resurgence of Communist Party Sunday and to secure support for the centrist bloc of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

"You should not allow the forces of the past to come to power again," he told voters, a clear reference to his Communist opponents. He did not specifically name any.

He strongly advocated those who can secure "stability and accord in our common home — Russia".

Yeltsin's speech was pre-recorded Thursday in a auditorium outside Moscow where the 64-year-old Russian leader is recuperating from the mild heart attack he suffered on Oct. 10.

"We travelled for 70 years along the path they now put us to return to," Mr. Yeltsin said in a clear refer-

ence to Soviet rule.

He also warned against attempts, advocated by several nationalist movements, to restore the Soviet Union, saying it was fraught with the "terrible fires of a civil war".

He urged the younger generation to go to the polling stations, saying their apathy could be "a vote for yesterday".

"You must not allow the country to be returned to the times when people were told how to dress, how to wear their hair and which songs to sing," he said.

Addressing the older generation, Mr. Yeltsin said they should remember the terror and repressions of the past.

Mr. Yeltsin did not mention the rebel region of Chechnya where a new upsurge in fighting has marred Moscow's attempts to stage local and national elections there as a means to stabilise the situation.

The popularity of the Russian leader is at a low ebb while all opinion polls predict the Communists, exploiting widespread disenchantment after three years of painful economic reforms, will be the biggest single party in the State Duma lower house of parliament.

All the major parties in the race for the Duma have one eye on a presidential poll, scheduled for June 16, 1996. Mr. Yeltsin has yet to decide whether to run.

Fresh rebel attacks in Chechnya overshadowed Russia's election campaign Friday, just two days before 104 million voters choose a new lower house of parliament for the vast Russian

Federation.

A senior official with the administration Russia has installed in the independence-minded Chechnya region said separatists had seized several buildings in the town of Urus-Martan, 20 kilometres southwest of the capital Grozny.

Russians and Chechens clashed in Gudermes, Chechnya's second city, Thursday. Moscow sent in helicopter gunships to try to drive fighters from the town.

Russian officials have said they are determined to conduct an election in the rebel territory, which unilaterally declared itself independent in 1991.

But rebels have vowed to disrupt the poll and turnout is likely to be far lower than in Russia itself, facing its second democratic election since the Soviet Union fell apart.

Voters spread across 11 time zones in the world's biggest country elect a new State Duma.

The Communists are expected to win around 15 per cent of the vote.

Mr. Yeltsin's top security aide, Alexander Korzhakov, said Thursday night the president would announce in February whether he intended to seek re-election in June.

"Will he or won't he? This is indeed the greatest problem," Mr. Korzhakov told a television interviewer.

"When we criticise the president, we sometimes don't think what will start if he doesn't run. It seems to me nothing good will come of it."

Under a constitution approved at the same time

as the last parliamentary poll, in December 1993, the president and his government have more powers than parliament.

But a strong showing for Communists and other conservative forces could lead to fresh battles between the two.

Prime Minister Chernomyrdin told a news conference this week there would be no change in government policy, even if the Communists did well.

"It is difficult for me to forecast but the Communists will get quite a number of votes. (but) there will be no U-turn in policy and we will continue on our course," he said.

Other parties likely to clear the five per cent barrier include Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia, the liberal Yabloko grouping, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultra-nationalist Liberal Democrats and the moderate nationalist Congress Of Russian Communities, whose main asset is a retired general, Alexander Lebed.

But turnout, just over 50 per cent in the last Duma election, could be hit by a flu epidemic in the Russian capital, which has closed schools and put hospitals under quarantine.

Medical officials say more than half a million Muscovites are suffering from flu. Mayak Radio said the epidemic could stop 25 per cent of the capital's voters from going to the polls.

However, some pollsters predict up to 65 per cent of the entire Russian electorate will vote.

O'no's singing ability.

The judge also ordered the FBI to reveal the names and addresses of the agents involved in the Lennon probe and describe their duties during the investigation.

But he denied Prof. Wiener's request that the FBI turn over documents explaining why there was communication between the White House and the FBI in 1972 over the Lennon probe.

Confidence Chairman Alex Ekwueme, Nigeria's last elected vice-president, said: "We will form a 19-man committee representing the six zones in the country to have a dialogue with the military government so as to see to their successful disengagement from power."

Delegates said the meeting, attended by hundreds of politicians from Africa's most populous African nation, soon ran into bickering over the annulled 1993 presidential election.

The chief convener, Michael Ajasin, leader of the opposition National Democratic Coalition, said the only solution to Nigeria's crisis was to install Moshood Abiola, its detained undeclared winner, as president.

The New Party's Jaw said he hoped the joint force would be strong enough to influence the elections of speaker and deputy speaker.

Grachev wants tough action against rebels in Chechenya

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Friday Russia should learn from the latest outbreak of fighting in Chechenya and respond to future rebel attacks with all the weapons at its disposal.

"Maybe in future it will be necessary to carry out actions, not on the scale of a year ago, but nevertheless no-nonsense military actions," he said after meeting Norwegian Defence Minister Joergen Kosmo.

"When (the enemy) attacks we must carry out no-nonsense military actions involving all weapons and techniques."

"What we had forecast happened yesterday. There was a cruel fight. There were big losses," Gen. Grachev said, adding that nine soldiers had been killed in fighting which broke out in Chechnya's second biggest town, Gudermes, Thursday.

Gen. Grachev said the rebels had taken advantage of a loose ceasefire agreed in June to allow for peace negotiations while the army's hands were tied.

"In the course of peace negotiations, as I suggested more than once, the rebels massed in Shali, Gudermes, Grozny and other inhabited areas," he said.

He said the rebels could carry out wide-ranging military activity in the regional capital Grozny in the next few days. "I think that some

corrective measures must be taken as a result of this sad experience," he said.

Chechen separatists captured the Russian-controlled town of Urus-Martan and fought fiercely with Russian troops in the town of Gudermes in a stunning show of strength Friday.

Chechen guerrilla Commander Boris Tassgiryev told AFP in Urus-Martian that "we are in complete control of Urus-Martan district."

The town, 20 kilometres south of Grozny, was well within territory captured by Russian forces in fighting earlier this year, but the independence rebels were able to take it without a fight.

Commander Tassgiryev said, "In Gudermes, 40 kilometres east of Grozny, fierce night-time clashes between separatist fighters and Russian troops tapered off shortly before dawn."

Only occasional small arms fire could be heard as a heavy fog rolled in early Friday. Frequent gunfire and explosions had been heard throughout the night.

The town, the second biggest in Chechnya and also well behind Russian lines, was stormed early Thursday by hundreds of Chechen fighters, according to the Russian Interior Ministry.

Russian military officials said 15 soldiers had been killed and 47 wounded in

Gudermes. On Thursday, a further 30 soldiers were reported missing in action.

Gen. Grachev said Friday that "there are heavy losses on both sides" and that reinforcements had been sent to the town, Interfax News Agency said.

The rebel offensive came on the second day of Russian-organised Chechen leadership elections that have been condemned by the separatists as a farce designed simply to legitimise the Russian-installed interim leader, Doku Zavgayev, the only serious candidate in the race.

The controversial four-day local elections were also to the Russian parliament, ahead of the nationwide vote Sunday. Chechen rebels have also rejected this vote, saying their republic is independent.

Vladimir Zorin, deputy head of the Russian administration in Chechnya, told AFP Friday that Gudermes had not been captured by the rebels. "The Russian flag still flies over Gudermes," he said, adding that the situation "is under control."

However, despite Mr. Zorin's confidence, the Chechen attack was a stunning show of strength.

An AFP correspondent said there were no Russian positions between Urus-Martan and the outskirts of Grozny, signalling a Russian pull back from a

swathe territory captured in bitter fighting all of this year.

Gen. Grachev said "I do not exclude that in the next two days they will carry out a major operation in Grozny."

Until the offensive, Chechen rebels and Russian forces only had full-scale clashes in a cluster of south-western ruined villages.

However, large numbers of fighters and weapons have quietly infiltrated into villages and towns behind Russian lines during the last months, AFP correspondents said.

Russian troops rolled into Chechnya in December, 1994, to crush the republic's independence bid. Most tolls estimate that around 30,000 people have died.

Independence leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, who remains in hiding in rebel-controlled villages in the southern mountains, recently said the war in Chechnya had "only just begun."

Russia reached an agreement with the rebels in July on a ceasefire and a troop withdrawal, but stopped implementing the accord in October after a bomb attack that left the Russian top commander in a coma.

The Russians also walked out of peace talks aimed at finding a political solution to the conflict.

Nigerian political talks end in confusion

LAGOS (R) — Nigerian politicians discussing proposals for a return to civilian rule tried to put on a brave face after unidentified hoodlums stormed in and broke up their meeting.

The talks had been called to try to forge a common position on a programme unveiled by military ruler General Sani Abacha in October envisaging a three-year transition to civilian government.

Local and international pressure on Gen. Abacha to restore democracy intensified following the execution last month of nine minority rights activists including writer Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Delegates said the talks at a Lagos hotel dubbed "the all-politicians summit" were about to finish when about a dozen hoodlums forced their way in and the meeting ended in confusion. Police moved in and arrested at least three people.

"Despite the pandemonium, we were still able to come together to try to fight a common cause," former Communications Minister Abubakar Rimi told reporters.

"People should not see the disruption as failure," said Mr. Rimi, a prominent politician from the conservative north.

But Olu Alabi, a former senator, said: "I was shocked. In fact I'm confused."

Conference Chairman Alex Ekwueme, Nigeria's last elected vice-president, said: "We will form a 19-man committee representing the six zones in the country to have a dialogue with the military government so as to see to their successful disengagement from power."

Delegates said the meeting, attended by hundreds of politicians from Africa's most populous African nation, soon ran into bickering over the annulled 1993 presidential election.

The chief convener, Michael Ajasin, leader of the opposition National Democratic Coalition, said the only solution to Nigeria's crisis was to install Moshood Abiola, its detained undeclared winner, as president.

British press IRA to disarm for peace

BELFAST (R) — Britain Friday challenged the IRA to turn a 16-month Northern Ireland truce into lasting peace by cooperating with a U.S.-backed committee looking into ways of scrapping illegally-held arms.

A three-man "international body" of experts, called in by Britain and Ireland, was later due to begin studying ways of getting rid of guerrilla weapons and bolstering the region's troubled peace process.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) rules out surrendering arsenals that fuelled a bloody campaign against British rule but its Sinn Fein political arm, which wants British forces' guns included in any "decommissioning" package, says it will meet the panel.

"The terrorism threat is very much in being, and the people of Northern Ireland know it," Sir John Wheeler, Britain's security minister in Northern Ireland told BBC Radio.

"I am optimistic about the

body because it will give the opportunity for IRA-Sinn Fein to end the problem of terrorism for all time.

"The eyes of the world...will be upon them, and the expectation will be that they will be working with the commission to make certain that it succeeds."

The panel, headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, has been established to break deadlock plaguing the peace drive for more than a year.

Britain and Ireland have also begun a parallel series of preliminary talks with political parties, designed to lead to round-table talks by the end of February.

But Britain insists it will not allow Sinn Fein to take part in negotiations on the province's future until the IRA makes some move towards disarmament.

Dublin advocates all-party talks to achieve disarmament as part of an overall political settlement.

Irish politicians hope the

international body will come up with ideas that will enable the British and Sinn Fein to compromise and get full talks under way quickly.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, Britain's chief Northern Ireland minister, was due to meet the Mitchell panel later Friday. He insists the panel has an advisory role.

The panel, including former Finnish Prime Minister Harri Holkeri and General A. John De Chastelain, Canada's chief of defence staff, will meet political parties and lobby groups on the disarmament issue in Belfast on Friday and Saturday.

It moves to Dublin Sunday and Monday, to meet Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring and other politicians.

Political allies of pro-British loyalist guerrillas, who refused to disarm after a truce they called soon after the IRA ceasefire, will make a submission to the Mitchell panel in Belfast.

10 killed in volatile S. African province

DURBAN (R) — Ten people were killed in South Africa's volatile Zulu heartland overnight and an off-duty policeman was arrested in connection with the killing of a teenager, police said Friday.

Police spokesman Inspector Vish Naidoo said the killings brought to 60 the number of people killed in political and criminal violence in Kwazulu-Natal province in seven days, down from 92 in the previous week.

He said 15-year-old Sibonelo Mhlongo was shot dead when about 15 men attacked residents in a district of Kwamashu township. The motive for the attack was not known.

"One firearm and ammunition was seized. An off-duty policeman was also among the attackers, and he is also one of those arrested," Mr. Naidoo said.

Human rights groups say although it has been difficult to know which fatalities are criminal or political, the number of people being killed in political violence in South Africa has fallen by more than half in the past year.

Up to 13,000 people were killed in Kwazulu-Natal in a decade of political violence between supporters of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and

President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) leading up to the 1994 general elections.

Meanwhile the premier of South Africa's industrial heartland accused the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Friday of proposing the secession of Kwazulu-Natal province from the rest of the country.

Tokyo Sexwale, premier of Gauteng province encompassing Johannesburg and Pretoria, told a news briefing an Inkatha draft constitution for Kwazulu-Natal "goes well beyond the understanding of the spirit and the letter" of South Africa's transitional post-apartheid constitution.

"Quite clearly some of these policies are intended to secede from the country, but they are camouflaged under the guise of federalism," Mr. Sexwale said.

Inkatha, headed by Chief Buthelezi, is at loggerheads with the African National Congress over IFP demands for virtual autonomy for Kwazulu-Natal.

Mr. Buthelezi remains home (interior) minister in the ANC-led government of national unity that took power nationally after the country's first all-race elections in April last year.

The ANC won seven of the nine provinces in last year's elections, losing only Kwazulu-Natal to Inkatha

and the Western Cape to the former ruling National Party.

Inkatha has walked out of the Constituent Assembly drafting a definitive post-apartheid constitution. The draft of the constitution is due to be completed by next May.

ANC Deputy General Secretary Ceryl Carolus appealed for Inkatha to return to the Constituent Assembly so its views could be heard.

"We still hope that they will be back in the new year...We want to make a very strong appeal for the IFP to return," she told the year-end briefing by senior ANC officials.

Mr. Sexwale said he did not want to antagonise Inkatha, but he said a number of IFP's proposals for a provincial constitution for Kwazulu-Natal, heartland for South Africa's eight million Zulus, amounted to camouflaged secession.

He mentioned proposals for the provincial budget, foreign relations, police and a defence force.

"To go the way the IFP constitution contemplates would be the way to break down the body and soul of the country," Mr. Sexwale said.

Nixon White House wanted Lennon deported

LOS ANGELES (R) — The U.S. government actively sought to have Beatle John Lennon deported in the early 1970's, according to a released by the FBI last court order.

The papers include a memo from the White House under former president Richard Nixon that details factors that should be used to obtain Lennon's deportation, including his use of drugs.

Jonathan Wiener, a University of California history professor, won a 12-

year battle to force the Federal Bureau Of Investigation (FBI) to hand over some of the files on its 1971-72 investigation of the late rock star.

U.S. District Judge Robert Tagasak also ruled that the FBI must answer whether it engaged in unlawful activities while investigating Lennon.

"For the first time, the FBI will be required to answer our questions about the real reasons they conducted surveillance of John Lennon and his anti-Vietnam war

activities," Prof. Wiener said at a news conference.

"The most important question we will ask is: Did the FBI violate the law in their investigation of Lennon? We believe they will have to answer yes," he added.

Prof. Wiener said he had received 250 pages of classified documents from the FBI's 300-page file, but not all of them were of a serious nature. Some critiqued Lennon's performances at specific concerts while others criticised his wife Yoko

Taiwan party attacks planned opposition coalition

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) led out Friday, at a time of coalition of two opposition parties, attacking it "collaboration liars and petty politicians."

KMT leaders were reacting to reports that the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the New Party (NP) were planning to combine forces.

The DPP and NP finally ended their political enmities hidden behind an aggravated ideological frontation, KMT spokesman Hansen Chien said.

He said the two parties "had forced their supporters and created chaos in local politics. It's a collaboration of

liars and petty politicians," Mr. Chien said.

KMT Secretary General Hsu Shui-Teh predicted the two groups would "never cooperate."

Six leaders of the DPP and the NP Thursday held a preliminary dialogue on forming a coalition in parliament to counter the KMT which has a slight majority. They agreed to set aside their conflicting views on the future of this Nationalist-held island "for the good of the people."

The DPP strongly advocates declaring Taiwan an independent island republic without political links with the mainland. The right-wing NP favours reunification with China, which drove Nationalist forces to the island in 1949 at the end of a civil war.

"The NP does not seek power in joining force with the DPP," said NP Secretary General Jaw Shau-Kong.

"Rather, we would like to set a positive example for the society, that those holding opposing views can also work together to push through legislation on public policies," Mr. Jaw said.

He added that a coalition of political parties "is inevitable for Taiwan's future."

Several DPP legislators, however, opposed the idea.

"The move would hurt DPP's integrity... We must not unite with the NP for short-term profits," said DPP parliamentarian Shen Fu-Hsiung.

Thursday's dialogue capped DPP's calls for "great reconciliation" and NP's support for a "coalition government" to confront the KMT which has dominated Taiwanese politics for more than four decades.

The DPP garnered 54 seats in the law-making body in the Dec. 2 elections and the NP tripled its seats to 21. The KMT lost five seats but still holds a majority.

Leaders present at the DPP-NP dialogue argued that a "combined majority" by opposition parties could be formed after "legislators of integrity" from the ruling party joined forces to fight against corrupt KMT colleagues who were or had links with gangsters.

The New Party's Jaw said he hoped the joint force would be strong enough to influence the elections of speaker and deputy speaker.

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Road signs to peace beyond Nablus

At a time when Israel needs to do what it can, even go out of its way, to convince the Arab people of its genuine desire to make an equitable and lasting peace with them, the Israeli authorities find it fit to do exactly the opposite of what can strengthen that cause. Yesterday, those authorities forced several hundred Jordanians, including a former prime minister and about 20 members of Parliament, to abandon plans to join their brethren in Nablus in celebrating the end of military occupation of the city and the dawning of the new era for peace. Instead of allowing, even encouraging the group to travel inside the West Bank, the Israeli authorities obviously procrastinated at the King Hussein Bridge, prompting the group to abandon the visit altogether.

We wonder whether the Israeli officials behind the episode did spare a moment to contemplate what their action meant as far as "relating" peace to the people of Jordan is concerned. The would-be visitors were obviously closely screened for "security" reasons by the Israelis much earlier — since it was a very meticulously planned and arranged trip — and only those who were "cleared" by the Israelis were in fact present at the bridge to cross to the West Bank. As such, Israel cannot cite "security reasons" for the obvious hurdles its posed against the visit.

All that the Jordanians in the group wanted to do was to express their genuine happiness over the course of the Palestinian-Israeli track of the peace process and share in the joy of the Palestinians, whether in Nablus or anywhere else in the West Bank and Gaza, over seeing the flag of military occupation coming down and the Palestinian flag going up, signalling a new era yet in the quest for peace and coexistence in the region.

It is highly unlikely that the Israelis gave any serious consideration to the possible fallout of the aborted visit on the general psyche of those who were members of the group as well as the Jordanian public at large whom Israel is courting in its own way to consolidate the state of peace between Jordan and the Jewish state.

Political theories abound as to why the Israeli behaviour at the bridge yesterday. Some even suggested that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, for considerations of his own, was behind prompting the Israelis to abort the Jordanian group's visit. Even the hypothesis that Mr. Arafat was indeed behind the affair does not absolve Israel of its own responsibility to behave in a manner that is conducive to building confidence among Jordanians who sincerely believe that the state of hostility with Israel as a neighbour is over and done with and peace has actually dawned across the Jordanian-Israeli frontier after the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty more than one year ago.

And if indeed is the real shape of things to come in Israeli behaviour, the net loser in the bargain will be those who support peace, which was found after decades of laborious search, and the cause to build on that peace.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily said that the Israeli pull out from Nablus and other towns of the West Bank constitutes a victory for the Palestinian people, who have struggled for so long to win their freedom. The withdrawal is indeed a success for the people who belong to the peace camp and will no doubt help enhance the concept of durable settlement, which paves the way for stability, security and prosperity for the people of the Middle East, said the paper. Referring to His Majesty King Hussein's telephone call to President Arafat to congratulate him on this achievement, the paper said that Jordan has never spared any efforts in its support for the rights of the Palestinian people in their homeland.

Commenting on the current efforts to reactivate the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations Al Dustour daily said that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is starting a fresh tour of the Middle East in order to help bring about comprehensive peace in the region. Mr. Christopher's tour comes on the heels of statements by the Israeli Prime Minister's talks with the U.S. administration and amid signs that Syria is ready to negotiate a lasting settlement with the Jewish state, said the paper. These developments came in the wake of statements by Presidents Assad and Bill Clinton who sounded optimistic about a settlement following their telephone conversation in the past week, the paper added. Observers believe that the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has prompted the Syrians to move fast towards reaching a settlement with Israel and drove the Israeli government into believing that this is the most opportune moment to achieve that settlement before next year's parliamentary elections.

Jordanian Perspective

Positive signs from the occupied lands

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE ISRAELI withdrawal from Nablus, the largest town in the West Bank, has discredited assertions that the Jewish state was only paying lip-service to the idea of evacuating territories occupied in the 1967 war and that its September 1993 declaration of principles and all subsequent agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were singularly designed to perpetuate its occupation of the lands.

We in Jordan and elsewhere who have been longing for a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot but rejoice over the sight of Palestinian policemen taking control over one West Bank town after another and of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat paying triumphant visits to the evacuated areas now under Palestinian autonomy. We share the joy and happiness of the Palestinians and are heartened that there is every sign of Israel living up to its obligations under the declaration of principles and the subsequent accords.

Granted that the declaration of principles and accords are not the best for the Palestinians in terms of predetermining that an independent Palestinian state in the territories that Israel occupied in the 1967 war and of ensuring that the nearly three million Palestinians who remain in diaspora return to their homes. Nor is there any guarantee that the status of Arab East Jerusalem will be decided in favour of the just and legitimate claims of the Palestinians. But the most realistic message that emanates from the obvious manifestation of the Israeli commitment to the accords it has signed with the PLO is that there is indeed hope that the Palestinians should not simply give up hope for the realisation of their aspirations.

Indeed, it is no secret that the physical return of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war to their homes seems to have been all but ruled out and that the compromise could be the right to compensation under United Nations Resolution 194. In any event, the net picture is that answers are not yet clear on any of these thorny questions.

Beyond assuring the supporters of the course of the Palestinian-Israeli peace track that there is a realistic process under way and that Israel was not simply trying to quell the intifada by signing the autonomy accords with the PLO, the Israeli army's departure, in some cases ahead of the agreed-upon schedule, is a clear message to proponents of defeatism amongst us. It strengthens the hands of the advocates of peace and weakens the arguments put up by the hardliners.

Much more important is the obvious fact that Israel has understood this concept and is behaving accordingly (as we saw in Israeli statements and actions despite the spate of militant violence against Israelis).

At the same time, it is a minefield that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) faces ahead of it. The situation is very tricky for Mr. Arafat and the PNA not only because of the economic dependence of the Palestinian territories on Israel but also because of the clear need for the PNA to adopt democratic means to deal with the opposition.

On the first count, Israeli leaders would be well-advised not to impose summary bans against Palestinians entering the Jewish state to make a daily living whenever an anti-Israeli attack occurs. Such actions would definitely backfire on the PNA and its policies and undermine the support for the peace process in its entirety simply because political complexities do not matter much a father to whose immediate priority is to earn enough to feed his children. In this context, we welcome the recent Israeli move to allow in nearly 10,000 Palestinians more into the Jewish state and urge Israel to gradually raise the number. After all, it was Israel which brought about the Palestinian dependence on the Jewish state and it should be prepared to put up with the situation until the Palestinians depend on themselves and do not need Israeli jobs.

This is an immediate priority, and we hope Israel will appreciate the pressing need to lift its

ban against the rest of the Palestinians from earning a livelihood in the Jewish state. As events in the past year have proved, there would be spurts of violence here and there, and while we do not condone any form of violence from any party, we also hope that both sides would also realise and appreciate that this is part of the price for consolidating peace.

Beyond that, however, is the urgent need for intense Arab coordination ahead of the "final status" negotiations between Israel and the PLO coming up in May.

It would be a completely unwise move for the Arabs and Muslims to leave the Palestinians alone in those negotiations. That is not to suggest any interference in the Palestinians' quest to realise their full political rights but a reflection of the reality that the Palestinian negotiating position with Israel is weak and could lead to Israeli fait accompli, whether in the context of Jerusalem or of Palestinian refugees, whose impacts would not be limited to the Palestinians but would extend to the Arab and Islamic worlds in general.

Jordan has repeatedly sought to remind the Arabs and Muslims of this reality, often at the cost of exposing itself to criticism and accusations of self-oriented motivations. Jordan's actions have proved it abundantly clear that these accusations and criticism are misplaced and the Kingdom's call for a collective Arab-Muslim position behind the Palestinians stems from a vision that things could go seriously wrong without such a position.

We are happy to discern a serious Syrian movement towards peace with Israel, and hope that this movement would translate into joint Arab action in the Palestinian track in time for the final status negotiations. Without such action, let the Arabs and Muslims be reminded, the reverberations of the lingering questions would bring too much to bear upon everyone in the region and perhaps even outside.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Times for rejoice as Israelis leave West Bank cities

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE ISRAELI withdrawal from occupied West Bank towns and reports that Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations are going to be reactivated as well as domestic affairs were discussed at length by local Arabic dailies in the past week.

By the end of the coming week, most of the West Bank towns will have been liberated amid the rejoicing of the Palestinian people and the disappointment of the Israeli extremists, said Issa Shueibi in Al Dustour. The writer said that the liberation of Nablus was of particular significance for the Palestinians because it is the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank and because the evacuation of the Israeli forces from it is considered a major event in Palestinian history, paving the ground for serious efforts towards the establishment of the Palestinian state. The writer said that the gradual liberation of the Arab towns is increasing the Palestinian people's self-confidence in their ability to establish their own independent state and has increased the frustration of the pessimists, who had shown total disregard to the Oslo agreements.

An editorial in Al Dustour said that a Jordanian popular delegation going to Nablus this week to take part in the celebrations marking the liberation of Palestinian towns reflects the very intimate relationship between Palestinians and Jordanians who have shared the pain, and the struggle over the past three decades, said the daily.

The Jordanian delegation will carry to the West Bankers the true feelings of affection and solidarity of their kinsmen on the eastern side of the River Jordan, who have lived through the ordeal of the Palestinians and shared their pain over the past years.

Now that the Palestinian towns are being liberated, eyes are turned towards the preparations for holding the Palestinian parliamentary elections in the coming month, according to Taiseer Tamimi, a writer in

Al Ra'i. More than a million people are reported to have registered to vote in the elections, and the Palestine National Authority has invited international observers to monitor the event, something which reflects the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) resolve to pursue democratic methods and prove to the world that it is serious in building democratic institutions that are vital components for a modern state, said the writer. The world's attention will be directed towards the coming elections and their results, said the writer, who added that the world community highly values the Palestine National Authority's decision to punish any one who might try to bribe people to win their votes. All this, said the writer, gives clear indications that the Palestine Authority intends to prove to the world in general and Israel in particular that it will rise to the occasion and that it is capable of winning the world's respect.

Referring to the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres talks with President Clinton in Washington, a writer in Al Dustour said that the Middle East is now awaiting a shuttle diplomacy by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to stimulate the stalled negotiations between Israel and Syria. Having heard favourable statements from Israeli and U.S. officials in Washington during the Israeli premier's visit and favourable reactions from Damascus, observers will be waiting to see if Mr. Christopher will make a headway in the Syrian-Israeli talks aimed at reaching a peace treaty, said the writer. Perhaps, said the writer, the United States will follow the pattern of the peace talks among the warring factions in former Yugoslavia to help the Israelis and the Syrians reach a settlement, especially as the Americans were successful in that endeavour. But, he said, nothing can be achieved, if Israel does not pull out from the Golan Heights.

It is too early to say whether President Clinton will succeed in bringing the Israelis and the Syrians

back to the negotiating table and settle their dispute over the Golan, said Mohammad Kharoub, a writer in Al Ra'i. But the fact that the president had shown optimism over the coming trip to the Middle East by his Secretary of State Warren Christopher means that he had heard new ideas from the Israeli Prime Minister in Washington that may open the way for renewed negotiations, he said.

Mr. Christopher's shuttle diplomacy and visits to Syria and Israel will no doubt shed more light on the new situation and would tell whether Mr. Clinton's obvious optimism is justified or not, said the writer.

Only complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian lands can guarantee a complete peace in the region, said Mahmoud Rimawi in Al Ra'i.

Commenting on the current efforts to revive the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, the writer said that nothing short of full pull out from lands occupied in 1967 and 1982 can help bring peace between the Jewish state and its neighbours. Israel's compliance with the international legitimacy and the U.N. resolutions will open the way for its endeavour to reach out to the 22 Arab states, said the writer. The withdrawal, he said, is prerequisites for Israel to become a full and natural partner in the Middle East.

Yasser Zaareh, a writer in Al Dustour, cast doubt about prospects for Israel and Syria to reach settlement due to Israel's unclear position. All that Shimon Peres offered in his talks in Washington is the formation of Syrian-Israeli committees to study problems related to water and security, but he did not openly declare Israel's intention to withdraw from the Golan.

Learning to kill

By Gwynne Dyer

FIRST, THE good news. All the pop psychologists were wrong: Human beings do have a strong innate resistance to killing their own kind. The military have known about it for 50 years.

Now for the bad news. The military have developed techniques to overcome this resistance, but it's not only the military who are using them. All the industrialised societies are now unintentionally subjecting their young to the same techniques, with the same results. We are teaching the kids to kill.

Where's the evidence? Even in the United States, after all, the murder rate has stayed roughly the same for the past 40 years. But it has stayed the same despite a fivefold growth in the prison population since 1975, which presumably keeps a great many potential murderers off the streets.

Moreover, the rate of "aggravated assault" (defined as "assault with intent to kill or for the purpose of inflicting severe bodily injury by shooting, cutting, stabbing, maiming, poisoning, scalding, or by the use of acids, explosives or other means") has gone up sevenfold since 1955.

There has been a staggering rise in the number of Americans who try to kill each other. If there had not been a huge improvement in emergency medical care in the meantime — 911 operators, helicopter medevac, and specialised trauma centres — far more of them would succeed. One expert estimates that with 1957-style medical services, the U.S. murder rate today would be three times higher than it is.

This is not just an American problem. The same steep rise in assaults has begun in most other developed countries, though often from a lower starting point. Elsewhere, too, it fails to translate into higher murder rates yet, for much the same reasons as in the U.S. But if current trends persist, it certainly will.

Something very bad is happening in the developed countries, and it is all our own fault. That is the disturbing conclusion of Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, a former paratrooper, trained psychologist, and serving U.S. army officer whose new book, "On Killing", deliberately

echoes the title of Karl von Clausewitz's classic work, "On War."

As Clausewitz was the first to analyse the art of war in a scientific spirit, so Grossman tries to dissect the nature of killing. He begins, as any soldier would, with what all military leaders and few civilians know: That you can train and arm a man, put him on the battlefield, and expose him to the imminent danger of death — and in most cases, he still won't kill.

Soldiers no longer shoot at bull's-eyes; they train against pop-up targets resembling human beings, in order to make shooting at human targets seem a familiar routine.

Armies had been fighting battles for thousands of years before anybody realised this, for the non-killers were ashamed of their "cowardice" and didn't talk about it. It was only in the final years of the World War II that U.S. army historians, conducting post-combat interviews with several hundred infantry companies under promise of anonymity, discovered that only 15 to 20 per cent of the soldiers ever fired their weapons in battle.

The others didn't run away... but they couldn't bring themselves to kill another human being. And even the great majority of them who fired their weapons aimed high.

As Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, in charge of the survey, reported: "The average and healthy individual — the man who can endure the mental and physical stresses of combat — still has such an inner and usually unrealised resistance towards killing a fellow man that he will not of his own volition take life if it is possible to turn away from that responsibility.... At the vital point he becomes a conscientious objector."

In fact, as few as five per cent of the soldiers on the battlefield were doing almost all of the killing. This was a stunning revelation, but when the experts went back into military history, they discovered that it had always been true. They

calculated the theoretical lethality of various kinds of weapons, and came up with kill rates 20 to 50 times higher than those actually observed in battle.

They found, for example, that 90 per cent of the abandoned muskets picked up after the battle of Gettysburg (1863) were loaded but not fired — and almost half were double-loaded. A 19th-century soldier could not avoid the highly visible act of loading his musket, but nobody noticed if he didn't shoot it.

Naturally, the military promptly turned their attention to solving this "problem" — and they have succeeded. As Grossman points out, they solved it mainly by a combination of desensitisation and conditioning techniques.

Soldiers no longer shoot at bull's-eyes; they train against pop-up targets resembling human beings, in order to make shooting at human targets seem a familiar routine. They also undergo specific "operant conditioning," designed to make shooting so reflexive that they only have time to think about it afterwards.

It worked so well that by the time of the Vietnam war, up to 95 per cent of American soldiers were firing their weapons at the enemy — although, as Grossman points out, that is a large part of the reason why Vietnam veterans suffer such a very high rate of post-traumatic stress disease. They were effectively tricked into killing against their will.

But the point Grossman is leading up to is this: In the past 30 years, for the first time, we have unleashed almost identical techniques of desensitisation and operant conditioning against our own children in the name of entertainment.

Only 20 years ago Sam Peckinpah's movies were the gloriest thing around; now half the films on general release are bloodier. And the video arcade team games that are the precise equivalent of the military's operant conditioning. As Grossman puts it: "The same tools that more than quadrupled the firing rate in Vietnam are now in widespread use among our civilian population." With the results that we see all around us.

British surveys, excavations start to reveal full extent of Feinan antiquities

In the first of two articles on recent archaeological explorations and excavations in the Feinan area in south Jordan, Rami G. Khouri looks at the work done by the British team.



General view of the Feinan area showing agricultural field systems in foreground (Photo courtesy BIAAB).

SPRAWLING OVER a series of rolling hills and open fields, amidst meandering wadis and in the shadow of Jordan's central highlands massif, is the extraordinary antiquity site of Feinan — long appreciated by archaeologists as one of Jordan's historical treasures, but until now only partially examined by scholars and only rarely visited by the general public. All this has started to change, however, due to the work by a team from the German Mining Museum at Bochum, headed by Andreas Hauptmann and Gert Weisgerber, Jordanian Department of Antiquities excavations headed by Mohammad Najjar, and, most recently, the completion of initial fieldwork in a long-term, British-sponsored and implemented research project. The British team aims to assess the cultural, architectural and economic history of the Feinan region since it was first inhabited by human beings in the Neolithic period, nearly 10,000 years ago.

The area of Feinan, in the northern Wadi Araba about 50 kilometres south-east of the Dead Sea, has been extensively inhabited and exploited throughout most major historical periods, due to three primary reasons: extensive copper reserves that are easy to mine because they are often close to the surface of the earth, plentiful water supplies from the Wadi Ghweir and Wadi Dana that meet there and lush, ample fertile lands in a climate that produces bountiful agricultural harvests.

The work at Feinan — like that at many other ancient sites in Jordan — is doubly important: It can significantly increase our understanding of our region's history and it may also provide the attention and protection that can slow down and perhaps even stop the intermittent robbing of ancient tombs that has become an important part of the unofficial economy of the entire Jordan Valley, especially the Southern Ghors and Wadi Araba.

The Wadi Feinan project started in August 1994 with a photogrammetric mapping phase that was directed by

Hugh Barnes and Leoni Blank, resulting in a high accuracy, detailed, computerised topographic map of a 20-square-kilometre area, based on low altitude aerial photographs taken in 1978. The second phase of the project in December 1994 continued the mapping work and generated a detailed plan of one part of the enormous site — the southern cemetery, with over 1,200 graves, about 60 per cent of which proved to have been robbed in recent times. Mr. Barnes told the Jordan Times in Amman recently. Phase three, directed by Isabelle Ruben in March 1995, included producing an accurate plan of the main settlement — Khirbet Feinan — and generally evaluating the archaeological potential of the entire area. The latter task, which again relied heavily on aerial photos, included test excavation in the southern cemetery, visits to selected sites, a close surface assessment of the ancient agricultural field systems, and transect surveys in three selected areas.

The results clearly show that the site is far richer in antiquities than had ever been known before, and that the important information about our ancient ancestors that is sealed in the ground by time and earth is very vulnerable to tomb robbers if rescue and protection efforts are not undertaken soon.

The south cemetery

The walking survey of the south cemetery, located on a sloping hill at the foot of the mountains immediately east of Feinan, documented over 1,200 plain, rectangular graves with simple headstones, mostly from the Byzantine period. About 10 per cent of the headstones had several different styles of engraved crosses, and three had letters around the crosses. One headstone had an engraving of an object that may be a Nabataean god.

The cemetery probably served two nearby settlements — Khirbet Feinan town about half a kilometre

to the northwest, and an extensive townsite to the west of the cemetery with buildings and tombs (some with cross-engraved headstones) dating from the Nabataean/Roman and Byzantine periods. The Byzantine period was an important phase of the town's ancient history, especially as the town of Phaino (Feinan) was the seat of a Bishop in the Province of Palestine III. Feinan was also important in early Christian history because it was a place of martyrdom for Christian slaves transported there during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. The slaves were transported from Syria and Egypt to work on the copper mines that had always provided the main source of the settlement's livelihood. The tombs are closely

packed and often aligned in rows, with the headstones at the west. A few had two headstones, perhaps indicating a double burial. One archaeologically excavated tomb held a single adult male whose name, Elias, was marked on his headstone. He was between 40-50 years old at death, suffered severe diseases of the joints, and had been buried wrapped in a textile shroud and wearing his leather sandals, but without any other grave goods.

Other grave types found in much smaller numbers included ones marked by rectangles or ovals of stones, or cairns (deliberately piled rocks). Some graves may include elaborate mausoleum-like structures built of hewn stone, but further research is required to verify this possibility.

The transect survey Three transect surveys were walked in different parts of the site to ascertain randomly the extent and nature of ancient occupation other than what had been recorded by previous scholars. Nine different sites were recorded, including:

- Scatters of heavily patinated flint flakes or small shreds;

- Single cairn tombs (some reaching six metres diameter) scattered on most hillsides and some valleys and plains; all had been already robbed and therefore lacked evidence for dating them, but some certainly dated from the Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age (c. 4500-2000 BC);

- Two isolated building complexes (one measuring 45x50 metres) dating from the Nabataean/Roman-to-

Byzantine eras, and an area of smaller rectangular and circular structures associated with cairn tombs and possibly representing a sanctuary or a small settlement (perhaps early in date, to judge by the pottery and flint tools);

- A wall made of blocks and boulders measuring at least 1.5 kilometres long, dividing the high and low ground along the north bank of Wadi Feinan, but otherwise its function is not yet clear; cemeteries; agricultural field systems.

Agricultural field systems

One of the most important results of the fieldwork to date has been the new information gleaned about the extensive agricultural field systems at Feinan, which were probably used

Syria, Israel clear way

(Continued from page 1)

which the Jewish state withdrew completely from the Sinai Peninsula. Mr. Peres said: "Look what (then Prime Minister Menachem) Begin did. And he was supposed to have been the toughest, and he not only paid Egypt full price, he also paid the Palestinians the autonomy, people forget that."

Peres published in Maariv its rival Yedioth Ahrooth on Friday showed a majority of Israelis were still opposed to total withdrawal from Golan.

The Dahaf Poll in Yedioth said 55 per cent opposed to a withdrawal while 42 per cent said they would back a 48 per cent withdrawal. President Assad was sincere about peace with Israel while 46 per cent said they believed he was.

Maariv carried a Mutagin oil showing 46 per cent opposed full withdrawal while 35 per cent supported

Israel wanted to place early warning stations on the Golan in the event of a withdrawal, but Syria refused in favour of air surveillance.

Israel previously insisted any discussions had to be preceded by military contacts while Syria "wanted to establish an agreement before" on substance, the U.S. official said.

Now they "clearly gave us the basis to create a connection" to enable the United States to convey ideas back

NATO in full gear

(Continued from page 1)

He said there was no signing of the agreement on normalisation of relations because the Serb party had earlier demanded the signature of an agreement on Prevlaka — a peninsula in the extreme south of Croatia.

This key region on the Adriatic coast, situated on the border with Montenegro, controls access to the port of

Kotor, where the Yugoslav fleet is based.

Belgrade is seeking to exchange it for a region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where rebel Serbs are threatening the Croatian port of Dubrovnik.

Normalisation of relations between Croatia and the FRY are considered an additional guarantee that the peace accords signed in Paris would hold.

Arafat launches campaign

(Continued from page 1)

became a cradle of Palestinian nationalism, giving birth to guerrilla groups.

Some of those Nablus fighters are having a hard time coming round to peace with Israel and pose a challenge to Mr. Arafat.

At the heart of the problem is Ahmad Tabouk, a 31-year-old legend in Nablus and leader of the Fateh Hawks group, which still favours taking up the gun despite a climate of Israeli-PLO peace. Officials are working to bring Mr. Tabouk into the fold.

Mr. Arafat told the cheering crowds on Friday: "National unity is our shield. It's our way and our guide to an independent state with its capital holy Jerusalem."

Nablus is the third main West Bank town handed by Israel to PLO under a September deal expanding West Bank self-rule. Israel is to leave three other West Bank towns by the end of the year. Peace talks on a final agreement between Israel

and the PLO are set for May.

A PLO official said meanwhile, the Israeli army will delay its scheduled withdrawal from the West Bank town of Bethlehem by three days until next Thursday.

"The Israeli army withdrawal has been put back slightly until work is finished on a bypass road" around the Palestinian town for Jewish settlers, General Ziad Al Atrash said.

"I think this road will be finished on Dec. 21," added the head of the Palestinian delegation to a liaison committee with Israel.

The delay in the pullout — initially scheduled for Monday — could put at risk planned celebrations for the first Christmas under Palestinian rule in the Biblical town, the birthplace of Jesus Christ.

After the Sept. 28 accord to extend self-rule across the West Bank, Israel began work on bypass roads to allow settlers to avoid towns handed over to Palestinian control.

Jordanians turned away

(Continued from page 1)

organiser of the visit dismissed this theory as highly unlikely. "Arafat stood to benefit from our presence in the ceremony," he said on condition of anonymity.

Besides Khaled Al Tarifi, the Palestinian minister in charge of local administration, had assured us that he personally undertook to organise the trip with the Israeli authorities, one of the organisers told the Jordan Times. "While anything is possible (regarding the PNA's intentions towards such high-profile Jordanian participation in the Palestinian flag raising ceremony), we doubt that Mr. Arafat had anything to lose from our participation," the organiser said. "We will have to wait and see what exactly happened."

Mr. Masri said he abandoned the plan for the trip

altogether after Friday's experience. The trip was originally scheduled for tomorrow (Sunday) but it was brought forward by a couple of days due to the fact that the Israeli army had vacated the city earlier than expected.

"We wanted to be in Nablus to join our Palestinian brothers in celebrating the lowering of the Israeli flag and the hoisting of the Palestinians flag there to show the world that we in Jordan are the closest to the people in Nablus."

"We wanted to be there" at a "particular moment," said Mr. Masri, in an obvious reference to hoisting the Palestinian flag. "That moment had passed, however, while we were still being on the Jordanian side, and there was no point in waiting any longer for an otherwise inexplicable and unjustifiable Israeli behaviour."

Mr. Masri rejected conten-

Several thousand Israelis live in seven settlements just south of Bethlehem, and have to drive through the town to reach their jobs in Jerusalem on the other side.

"There will be stone-throwing, shots, murders. The bypass must be finished," before the army pulls out, warned Michael Strich, a 45-year-old settler from Efrat.

Work on the Bethlehem bypass will not be fully completed until next year but cars should be able to use the road from next Wednesday, the Israeli construction ministry said.

Military commanders promised settler leaders Friday that the army would at least retain control of the main road through Bethlehem until the bypass road was built.

Palestinians have been preparing with great fanfare their first Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem and Mr. Arafat is to attend the Dec. 24-25 festivities.

The Israeli army has already evacuated administrative offices in Bethlehem, and only a few soldiers remain in a guard post at the centre of town.

tions that the Israeli procrastination had anything to do with the change of schedule (from Sunday to Friday) or with arrangements regarding the list of participants. "Everything was taken care of meticulously," he and other organisers asserted. "The fault definitely lay with the Israelis."

Following the decision to return to Amman, some of the participants assembled to chant slogans against the Israeli occupation and to chant national songs. On the other hand, members of the group were so dismayed by the Israeli behaviour that many of them were voicing dissatisfaction with the peace process itself. "If this is the kind of peace we have with the Israelis, then I am not hopeful," one participant said. "Today's incident proves that the Oslo accords are no more than a consecration of the Israeli occupation," the participant added.

EU to have 'euro' as currency

(Continued from page 1)

acceptance of the new money. "It's not possible to sell anything if you don't have a name," he said. Officials said "euro" will stand alone and not be a prefix to existing currencies. One idea had been to have a single currency of one value, but to name it the "euro-mark," "euro-franc," or "euro-guilder" so as not to upset those fearful of losing touch with names of currencies that have been around for centuries.

Amid a snowstorm, the EU leaders gathered here for two days of talks in which they will also consider the union's plans to expand to the south and east in the next few years.

On Saturday, the leaders met with 10 East European counterparts who complain the EU is dragging its heels in opening up to its neighbours. A domestic fight was heating up with Germany being accused of pushing for early EU membership for Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic at the expense of other East European nations.

Most of Germany's EU partners believe the EU should open accession negotiations with 10 or 15 likely candidates at the same time and then decide which ones should be in the fast lane.

A single European currency is seen by many as Western Europe's most ambitious plan since integration began in the wake of World War II. Supporters say it will cut billions of dollars of exchange costs to businesses, simplify life for travellers and bolster the EU's credentials as an economic superpower.

In 1999, the first group of nations are to permanently lock their exchange rates. Governments, banks and other financial institutions have then until 2002 to switch to the Eurocurrency. On Jan. 1 of that year, new European coins and banknotes introduced across the single currency zone run by a EU central bank.

French unions press Juppe

(Continued from page 12)

schamp, who met with the prime minister.

Mr. Blondel on Thursday issued an ultimatum, demanding immediate "global negotiations" with Mr. Juppe, "all night if necessary," saying that the planned round-table with the prime minister was too far away.

Mr. Vianet also called on Mr. Juppe to bring forward Thursday's meeting to discuss "withdrawal" of the social security reform.

The government says the meeting should be about unemployment and job creation, while the unions have demanded that its agenda be enlarged to take in Juppe's social security reform plan.

Meanwhile partial rail services resumed in northern France and several subway trains were running in Paris Friday.

The strike began crumbling after Mr. Juppe gave up on a plan to cut public sector retirement benefits and agreed to renegotiate from scratch a restructuring plan for the rail-

ways, which are in debt to the tune of 175 billion francs (\$35 billion).

These were the two key issues behind the strikes, which snowballed into France's worst social crisis since the May 1968 student revolts.

But the CGT and Force Ouvriere are still demanding that the government withdraw a package of social security cutbacks. Social security's accumulated debts will total 250 billion francs (\$50 billion) by the end of the year.

The first French high-speed trains to run on a domestic route in three weeks arrived at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport Friday from the northern city of Lille.

Eurostar rail service between London and Brussels, which crosses northern France, was operating normally.

In Paris, the RATP mass transit system said underground trains were operating unevenly on seven lines out of the city's 13, along with 10 per cent of the city's buses.

Dini wins key votes

ROME (AFP) — Italy's government won two confidence votes Friday in the lower house of parliament on amendments to the budget bill for 1996, a parliamentary source said.

Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's technocrat administration had been expecting success in the vote on the amendments to its 1996 budget legislation, despite a threat from opposition rightist parties that they would not support the bill.

The first vote was supported by 306 deputies, with 292 against and one abstention. In the second vote of confidence, 310 voted for and

297 against, with one abstention. The required majority was 300.

On Thursday, the government had announced that it would call for a confidence vote on two "maxi-amendments" to the budget bill, so as to speed up adoption by the lower house of parliament and allow final passage before the end of December.

Facing a flood of more than 2,500 amendments to the bill, the government grouped measures it wanted to have adopted in the form of two "maxi-amendments" on which it asked for a confidence vote.

Save water... every drop counts!

Growing income gap becomes issue in Washington

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A widening gap between rich and poor in the United States has gotten the attention of policymakers in Washington, but opinions are sharply divided on remedies for the problem.

Fuelling the debate are a series of reports showing a growing disparity between the wealthiest and poorest Americans — a phenomenon with important political consequences in the upcoming 1996 election year.

"The rich are getting richer, and everyone else, including the broad-based foundation of America, the middle class, is getting poorer or at best staying put," said Representative Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat who organised a

forum on the matter earlier this month.

Others say the problem is being exaggerated for political reasons.

"A lot of the rhetoric is divorced from reality," said Marvin Kosters, an economist with the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "It is hard to make the case that things are much worse than we've known in a generation."

Brookings Institution economist Gary Burtless said, however, the figures are clear and inescapable.

His study showed the richest five per cent in the United States earned 25 times the poorest five per cent in 1995, compared with 11.7 times the poorest group's income in 1969.

A study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development released earlier this year showed the United States had a larger disparity between rich and poor than 15 other industrialised countries with comparable data available.

"Among serious economists and statisticians there is no debate. It's accepted," Mr. Burtless told AFP.

But Mr. Burtless said government social programmes and tax policies, often blamed for the big gap, are surprisingly a minor factor in the disparity.

One of the biggest factors is "growing inequality in wages" of Americans, with the best educated and best trained getting bigger pay increases and unskilled workers

lagging. "Good job opportunities for less skilled workers are disappearing in nearly all U.S. industries," Mr. Burtless said.

Economists Robert Frank of Cornell University and Philip Cook of Duke University said in a paper presented at the forum that Republican tax cut proposals could make this gap between haves and have-nots even greater.

"The problem of our time is... the multiple evils of rising inequality, budget deficits and slow growth," they wrote. "Yet the quintessential policy prescription of this era — a tax cut for middle- and upper-income people — is no more likely to cure these problems than monetary con-

traction was likely to cure the Great Depression."

Economist Edward Wolff said in another report that the top one per cent in the United States controls 42 per cent of the country's wealth, a far higher percentage than Britain, France or Canada.

"The United States — the great egalitarian society — has the widest income disparity of any modern democratic nation," commented Steven Rattner of the investment bank Lazard Freres in a recent editorial.

Short-term remedies for the gap could include raising the minimum wage and boosting tax credits for the working poor. But across the political spectrum, analysts and policymakers say educa-

tion and job training is the key to reducing the disparity.

Former representative Jack Kemp argued against government efforts to redistribute income, saying, "I don't think poor people are poor because rich people are rich."

Mr. Rattner supported a proposal to allow families to deduct up to \$10,000 for education and training and to provide state vouchers for job training expenses.

"But congressional Republicans have ignored the issue," Mr. Rattner said. "Indeed, their proposals, essentially huge cuts in everything, would worsen matters."

"It's fine for the rich to get richer. It's not fine for everyone else to get poorer," Mr. Rattner said.

ASEAN signs pact on services, intellectual rights

BANGKOK (R) — ASEAN ministers Friday signed what they called "breakthrough" agreements to open up service industries, protect intellectual property rights and speed up the timetable for a free trade area by 2003.

Economics ministers of the seven-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed pacts to open talks in January on liberalising trade in services and to set up a region-wide patent and trademark office.

A strong attempt would be made to finish talks on opening up financial and banking services, tourism and telecommunications by mid-1997, the ministers said.

Thai Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay Wirawan told reporters Friday, the last day of a two-day summit of ASEAN leaders in Bangkok, that talks on opening the three service sectors should be concluded in 18 months.

"Member states shall liberalise trade in services in a

substantial number of sectors within a reasonable timeframe by eliminating substantially all existing discriminatory measures and market access limitations amongst member states," the service agreement says.

Another agreement on intellectual property rights would help create an ASEAN patent and trademark office to spur development of the region's high-technology industry.

An ASEAN intellectual property association would be set up over the coming months to provide arbitration in disputes on intellectual property.

"Member states... understand the necessity to adopt appropriate measures to prevent the abuse of intellectual property rights by right-holders or the resort to practices which unreasonably restrain trade or adversely affect the international transfer of technology," the agreement said.

UAE joins WTO

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has formally joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) after resolving differences over its economic policy, said Gobash, economy and commerce minister, has said.

Mr. Gobash said the Geneva-based WTO, which has replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), accepted the UAE's membership Wednesday after agreeing on arrangements for a list of goods presented by the UAE to the group.

The list includes products and services exempted from import tariffs and those subject to low taxes as well as facilities offered by the emirates to foreign investors, including free capital and profit transfer.

Mr. Gobash said membership of the WTO would open up new markets for the UAE and remove barriers to its petrochemical and garment exports.

"This will hopefully lead to boosting economic growth rates in the long run in the UAE and increasing demand for its oil," he told the official news agency WAM.

More than 120 countries signed the new WTO free-trade accord in Morocco last year and officials expect it to increase global trade as it provides for easing customs barriers among the signatories.

Tripoli vies Tokyo for position as world's most expensive city

LONDON (AFP) — Tokyo and Osaka/Kobe are still the most expensive cities for expatriates in the world, but the Libyan capital, Tripoli, is fast catching up with them, a British study has calculated.

The London-based Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) said in its latest twice-yearly "Worldwide Cost of Living Survey" that the weaker yen has made the Japanese cities marginally less exorbitant.

But the cost of living is still twice as high in Osaka as in Lisbon.

Tripoli, meanwhile, is becoming ever more expensive, as Libya continues to suffer the impact of economic sanctions.

The 20 most expensive cities remain concentrated in Europe and the Far East, with the exception of Tripoli and of Libreville, in Gabon.

A stronger Swiss franc has made Switzerland's two main centres, Zurich and Geneva, Europe's most expensive cities, and next in global ranking behind Tripoli. After the Swiss cities follow Oslo and Paris.

An improved fiscal climate in Italy has pushed Rome up into the top 50, as the lira has rallied, but Rome remains the cheapest western European city.

In eastern Europe, Budapest and Bucharest are good value for money, with the cost of living at half the level of Munich or Duesseldorf.

Moscow, however, is the most expensive eastern European city for foreigners, and ranks 25th in the world.

The Asian capitals of Hong Kong and Seoul have climbed up the list, to 17th and 20th position respectively. But Singapore and Taipei have slipped back.

New York is still the most expensive city in the United States, but on a global scale has become more affordable, in 36th place from 33rd six months ago.

Report: East Asia well placed to continue stable growth

TOKYO (AFP) — East Asia appears to be well placed to continue attracting the inflows of foreign capital that have fuelled the region's growth, Japan's Economic Planning Agency (EPA) said Friday.

The EPA, in its white paper on the 1995 world economy, said the Mexican currency crisis that began the year but considerable pressure on East Asia.

But the region's attractiveness as a destination for direct foreign investment, rather than equity and bond investment, and continued attention to economic fundamentals should provide it with the capital inflow stability needed to continue growth.

"The significance of solid fundamentals was driven home in late 1994, when the currency crisis forced Mexico into radical policy changes and briefly affected the currencies of countries with heavy budget and trade deficits," the agency said in its white paper.

The Mexican economy went into crisis due to the overvalued peso, inflation

worries caused by deteriorating state finances, political instability, and huge withdrawals of U.S. funds attracted to higher American interest rates.

The Mexican crisis led to selling of Asian currencies, notably in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, prompting massive intervention by currency authorities.

"Once the sound overall fundamentals of East Asia were properly evaluated, selling pressure on East Asian currencies was quickly dampened," the EPA said.

East Asia and Latin America attracted a combined 71 per cent of private sector capital inflows into the developing world in 1994, the report said.

In East Asia, direct investment accounted for half of the fund inflows of 1993, up from 10.3 per cent in 1980, while securities investment represented 78.7 per cent of inflows into Latin America, compared with 6.1 per cent in 1980.

The high proportion of direct investment in East Asia reflected the region's relatively strong fun-

damentals, the agency said.

Direct investment is more stable because the funds could not be easily withdrawn, unlike "hot money" securities investment, which can disappear just as quickly as it arrives.

"In East Asia, and Latin America, it is necessary to induce inflow of capital from outside to finance investment that cannot be fully covered by domestic savings," said Mitsuru Tanuchi, the EPA's director of overseas research and author of the white paper.

"It will be the challenge of those developing nations to see to it that there is stable inflow of capital so that there will be economic growth based on stability," Mr. Tanuchi told a briefing for the foreign press.

U.S., Russia aim for smooth entry of new \$100 bill

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. and Russian monetary officials are working closely to ensure a smooth introduction abroad of a new \$100 bill.

The planned issue of the new bill in early 1996, with special features to guard against counterfeiting, has caused a bigger splash in Russia and other eastern European countries than it has at home.

U.S. dollars are the most widely held foreign currency in Russia — many in the \$100 denomination — and both Russian and U.S. officials are anxious to avoid a sudden rush to change the old for the new.

GLASBERGEN

"If you stare long enough at the pattern on my tie, you'll see a 3-D message that says 'My Boss Is A Moron'."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Arginton

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

UGSIE
ROMUN
TRIVED
TEANIN

Answer: FOR "AN" (Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GRIMY TRILL COMPEL INFANT
Answer: How a crook can make a good impression — WITH A FINGERPRINT

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This morning be sure to keep promises you have made to your loved ones, and later tonight you can settle an account before working on your talents.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Handle important correspondence today before solving some problem with an associate. This evening is harmonious at home with your mate.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Improve your financial status early today and then handle some tasks efficiently and profitably. Plan the future wisely.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Get your appearance improved this morning, and then soothe your mate's wounded pride. Set up appointments with an expert.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan a course through which you can gain your secret desires. Be pleasant with a close tie and later you can be with fine friends.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You can take some wise steps this morning toward gaining personal aims, and then you can start handling correspondence.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Some career activities with the public can have good results this morning, then be sure to handle that financial affair wisely.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get out to some interesting affair this morning and later today handle a personal problem before meeting with good friends.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Be practical this morning, and later today get rid of some problem which has been vexing you for some time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Finish those arrangements with a partner and then soothe a good friend in trouble before you handle business affairs.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Work quietly and efficiently and all goes well this morning, before you contact bigwigs you know for assistance on a new project.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get future amusements well arranged this morning, though a problematical affair from afar can irk you later this evening.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE Daily Crossword by Glenon Patgrave

ACROSS

- Neophyte
- Spiritual leader
- Take five
- Fume
- Deeply bitter
- Montreal player
- Public houses
- Lania
- Ridge of rocks
- Took
- sustenance
- Bound
- Short outline
- Disobedient
- Soda fountain item
- Dogma
- Milling
- Change position
- The things here
- Melted fat
- Measured liquid
- Cold manner
- In the old days
- Sandy's sound
- Momentary light
- Emerald
- Shoreline
- Family member
- Cardinal point
- Religious sect members
- Season
- FBI agent
- Card game
- Nerd
- Faux pas
- Newman
- Stare at
- Apartment
- Ms. James
- Notices
- Passover feast
- Nobleman

DOWN

- Court case
- Gossipy woman
- Make fresh again
- Authorizes
- Discrimination of a kind
- Farm units
- Kind of nail
- Show
- Dreamer
- Peruse again
- Energies put forth
- Extraordinary: abbr.
- Bean curd
- Dry run
- Southern bread
- Pick up
- Just out
- Phantasm
- Pleasant
- Dale
- Trendy resorts
- Take on
- Childish
- Vandalize
- Condition of stale beer
- Swine sound
- Shape
- Kind of horse
- Roadsters
- Bighearted one
- Struck, old style
- Excite pride in
- Highway
- Kind of energy
- Fusses
- Appeal to
- Crossword puzzle part
- Lament
- Vigor

Peanuts

SOMETIMES I'LL BE LYING IN BED LIKE THIS... SORT OF HALF ASLEEP...

THEN, SUDDENLY, I HEAR COYOTES HOWLING... THEY SOUND SAD AND LONELY... THEN I GET DEPRESSED...

I THOUGHT I HEARD COYOTES HOWLING ONCE, BUT IT WAS A DOUGHNUT CALLING ME...

Andy Capp

I'M GOING TO DO THE DECENT THING AND WALK OUT OF YOUR LIFE, PET — I'M COMPLETELY USELESS, RIGHT?

OH, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT — AT LEAST SIX WIVES ON THIS STREET COULD COUNT YOU AS A BAD EXAMPLE

YOU'RE JUST SAYING THAT

Mutt'n' Jeff

THE BOSS WANTS US TO CUT DOWN EXPENSES!

HE'S EXPECTING A MR. CHOWDER, AN OUT-OF-TOWN CUSTOMER!

JEFF THIS IS MR. CHOWDER. I WANT YOU TO SHOW HIM THE SIGHTS OF THE CITY!

OH-YES SIR!

AND THAT BUILDING ON THE RIGHT IS THE POST OFFICE!

Government-guided agencies revitalise AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Share prices dramatically recovered by nearly five per cent in the Jordanian stock market this week after government-guided investment houses intervened strongly to address investors' complaints that the state's tight monetary policies were depressing the market and a few companies informally released their performance figures for the first 11 months of the year, brokers said Thursday.

The recovery came after several weeks of continued depression in the market as a result of a strong crunch on liquidity, and institutional buying by state-run investment agencies nudged by the government appeared to have reversed the trend, the brokers said.

The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said volume for the week ending was 6.1 million dinars (\$8.47 million), more than double the previous week's 2.8 million dinars (\$3.89 million).

The week saw 3.5 million shares changing hands under 4,568 contracts, with daily average trading registered at 1.2 million dinars (\$1.66 million), compared with the previous week's 600,000 dinars (\$834,000), the report said.

The official AFM index based on 60 major companies closed at 159.3 points, 7.3 points, or 4.8 per cent, up from the week's opening of 152 points, according to the report.

Separate sectoral indices showed that commercial banks gained 3.2 per cent, insurance firms one per cent, services companies 4.3 per cent and industrials by 8.4 per cent.

Industrials accounted for the highest volume in sectoral trading on a turnover of 2.98 million dinars (\$4.14 million), or 48.6 per cent of the weekly volume, followed by commercial banks with 1.74 million dinars (\$2.41 million), or 28.4 per cent, the services sector with 1.38 million dinars (\$1.91 million), or 22.5 per cent, and insurance stocks with 330,000 dinars (\$458,700), or 0.5 per cent.

Stocks of 94 companies were traded during the week. When business closed for the week, 76 companies had gained, eight had dipped and 10 remained unchanged.

AFM dealers, who cannot be identified under standing market guidelines said, the recovery in the market was mainly the result of intervention by government-guided agencies such as the Social Security Corporation and the Jordan Investment Bureau, which have several millions of idle capital.

The brokers also said that a handful of companies appeared to have "leaked" performance figures with a view to restore confidence in the depressed market.

"For the moment the situation looks fine, but there is a

widespread belief that the rise in prices are not fully realistic since the indirect government intervention was clearly visible in the market," said one dealer.

"The shortage of funds in the market that is depressing enthusiasm is only slightly addressed," but "if the government agencies maintain a strong presence then the recovered prices could be maintained," added the dealer.

Funds from the market were channelled to high-interest short-term certificates of deposit offered by the Central Bank of Jordan and to real estate dealings as well as to meet shareholders' obligations to meet subscription calls for paid-up capital instalments by companies.

New companies with fresh issues as well as already listed companies seeking to raise capital contributed to the drain on the capital in the market, said the dealer.

"We can expect a natural recovery early in the new year, particularly that the government has speeded up work on legislation that will allow foreign companies free access to the Amman stock market," added the broker.

Market observers are unanimous that the AFM needs an urgent inflow of fresh capital, part of which could come in the form of foreign investments with the enactment of the new regulations that remove some of the restrictions on foreign dealers entering the market.

Bae-Dassault link shows the way for European defence industry

PARIS (AFP) — British Aerospace (BAe) and Dassault of France have announced a link, verging on a merger, of their future fighter aircraft activities, blazing the way for a restructuring of European defence industries.

They revealed that on Oct. 31 they had signed an agreement to create a joint subsidiary for research and development concerning a future fighter to replace the Rafale, built by Dassault of France, and the Eurofighter — which has been developed by Britain, Italy, Germany and Spain.

The Les Echos newspaper here reported that the agreement spoke of a true "engagement" between the two

groups and the report suggested that "already a marriage of their aeronautic activities is being considered."

The first stage, lasting from five to seven years, was intended to set up a means of demonstrating systems and technologies for construction in about 2025 of the fighter that is to replace the Rafale and the Eurofighter.

The French and British governments have approved the project but have not yet given any formal commitment about flows of finance, the report said.

Executives at Dassault Aviation took a more cautious line, saying that "it is not yet a wedding" and that the agreement was intended "to create a subsidiary."

Work had yet to be done on the legal status of the new entity and "we hope it can be operational in 1996," they said.

The way towards such links was already in the making. For several years British Aerospace (BAe) has been discussing creation of a joint company in the missile business with the French group Matra.

On Monday the French group Thomson CSF announced that it was creating a joint company with the British firm GEC in sonar for submarines.

Links between French and German firms in the defence field were strengthened recently when Germany said it would participate in financing the French Helios 2 and Horus spy satellite program.

Internet is key PC development, says Gates

YOKOHAMA, Japan (R) — The Internet is the most important development for personal computers since the introduction of graphics, said Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft software developer.

communications will become easier. A single person can contact distant consultants and customers with a PC without having to travel to an office, he added.

Also, large companies may modify their work environments by allowing employees to work from home some days instead of commuting to the office, he said.

"We are finding a new way of computing," Mr. Gates said.

But the Internet is still in the beginning stage and needs telecommunications companies to provide speedier and cheaper connections, he said.

While the Internet is mostly accessed through modems connecting at speeds of 14.4 kilobits per second, pictures and graphics appear too slowly, he said. The speed should be around 1,500 kilobits per second or more, so video images can appear without jerkiness, he added.

As the speed of the network increases, the utility of PCs goes up, Mr. Gates said.

He said that before the Internet, the biggest turning point for the computer industry came from the graphical interface, which advanced computing — which until then had used only text — to include pictures and graphics. This came about through the development of Microsoft Windows and innovations by Apple Computer, he added.

Mr. Gates also envisions the coming of TV PCs, wallet PCs and kiosk PCs — the latter would allow people to access a network from anywhere, much like using a public telephone.

"During the next 20 years we will begin to think of the PC as we do the phone, TV or radio," he said.

He said he also sees businesses becoming smaller in the future because com-

munications will become easier. A single person can contact distant consultants and customers with a PC without having to travel to an office, he added.

Also, large companies may modify their work environments by allowing employees to work from home some days instead of commuting to the office, he said.

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'Aqaba has become a transit area for a one-night stay'

★ OCCUPANCY RATES at Aqaba hotels fell sharply after the earthquakes and, according to many hoteliers there, the tourism season has been badly hit with no reservations for Christmas and the New Year, and many tourists requesting cancellations. Owners of Miramar, Aquamarina, Petra International and Al Cazar hotels say that occupancy rates plunged from nearly 65 per cent to about 10 per cent and, as such, they have either dismissed or are considering laying off tens of workers.

Samaan Qusous, board chairman of the Miramar Hotel said Aqaba was a centre for many major Danish and Finnish tourism companies but these firms have moved to Eilat. "They bring tourists to Aqaba for an hour or two on the way to Petra and Wadi Rum," he said. Noting that Aqaba had lost its tourism attraction, Dr. Qusous said claims of an increase in tourism to Aqaba were not true. "It has become a transit area for a one-night stay," he added, pointing out that the income of the hotels dropped by 20 per cent from the 1994 level. After the earthquake, he said, the city has become empty and the shores are deserted. "Tourism is non-existent and there are no Austrians who form the largest group of tourists to Aqaba," he indicated, adding that there are no reservations for Christmas and the New Year and that many bookings are being cancelled. Dr. Qusous said if the situation continues like that, the hotel will be closed for a period that may extend until the end of the season.

The Miramar chairman was very critical of the government. "Despite all that has happened, we did not find senior officials coming and meeting with the tourism parties to assess the damages and put the appropriate solutions in a collective and organised manner," he said. "What happened were visits for few hours to attend press conference and appear in the media only." Emphasising that such attitudes do not restore the tourists' confidence to Aqaba, Dr. Qusous stressed that the city is in competition with Eilat and Sharm Al Sheikh, in Egypt, and should have received the appropriate and quick support that the other cities had received from their countries in the tourism and commercial sectors.

SIMON KHOURY, owner of Aquamarina hotels, said he had to close one of his three hotels after the recent earthquake and aftershocks and will be closing the second soon because there are no tourists amid 100 per cent cancellation of bookings. He estimated damages to the hotels at JD 150,000 and noted that the occupancy rate had fallen from around 70 per cent to about 9 per cent. He said there are no reservations for Christmas and the New Year and not even for the coming months.

Mr. Khoury said he pays JD 50,000 a month in salaries to his employees and that he is wondering until when he has to bear these expenses. Unlike Dr. Qusous who fired 30 workers, Mr. Khoury indicated he was reluctant to dismiss any of his staff and demanded urgent support to avoid further losses and maintain the level of services from declining. "We request that a committee representing the government and the Industrial Development Bank be formed to examine the damages and find a way to support the sectors either by loans or advances to overcome this crisis. Otherwise problems will grow and regret would not be useful," Mr. Khoury added that a wide-ranging media campaign on the local and international levels should be launched to lure tourists to Aqaba. He proposed organising the campaign in cooperation with Royal Jordanian and by offering 50 per cent reduction on air fares and hotel charges. Furthermore, Mr. Khoury saw a need to set up an association for the owners of hotels in Aqaba and an Aqaba Chamber of Tourism which should be independent from Amman. Such a chamber, he said, must shoulder the tourism responsibilities for Aqaba with full government backing at the earliest possible time. "Otherwise the 1996 season will be totally lost," he pointed out.

To be continued tomorrow

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Dec 13/12/95	Tokyo Dec 14/12/95
Sterling Pound*	1.5345	1.5363**
Deutsche Mark	1.4492	1.4509
Swiss Franc	1.1755	1.1763**
French Franc	5.0558	5.0643**
Japanese Yen	101.65	101.66
European Currency Unit	1.5630	1.5639**

* USD Per 100
** European Opening @ 9:00 a.m. GMT

European Currency Unit Rates Date: 14/12/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.62	5.50	5.31	5.18
Sterling Pound	6.31	6.18	6.06	6.06
Deutsche Mark	3.93	3.68	3.50	3.50
Swiss Franc	2.00	1.81	1.68	1.62
French Franc	5.18	5.18	5.06	4.93
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
European Currency Unit	5.38	5.31	5.18	5.18

Interest rate rates for accounts carrying U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Prevalent Metals Date: 14/12/1995

Metal	USDOZ	JD/Gm*	Metal	USDOZ	JD/Gm
Gold	366.15	1.70	Silver	5.12	0.100

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 14/12/1995

Currency	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0862	1.0915
Deutsche Mark	0.4874	0.4898
Swiss Franc	0.6005	0.6035
French Franc	0.1411	0.1418
Japanese Yen*	0.6955	0.6990
Dutch Guilder	0.4354	0.4376
Swedish Krona	0.0000	0.0000
Italian Lira*	0.0443	0.0445
Belgian Franc	0.0000	0.0000

* Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 14/12/1995

Currency	Buy	Sell
Israeli Dollar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.043725	0.044340
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3670	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2180	0.2280
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2130	0.2125
Cypriot Pound	1.5180	1.5840

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3750/60	Canadian dollar	1.4429/39
	1.6158/68	Deutschemarks	1.6158/68
	1.1638/48	Dutch guilders	29.66/70
	29.66/70	Swiss francs	4.9653/03
	4.9653/03	Belgian francs	1595.0/6.5
	1595.0/6.5	French francs	102.05/15
	102.05/15	Italian lire	6.6260/60
	6.6260/60	Japanese yen	6.3700/50
	6.3700/50	Swedish crowns	5.5907/07
	5.5907/07	Norwegian crowns	1.4162/72
	1.4162/72	Danish crowns	0.7400/10
	0.7400/10	Singapore dollars	7.7343/53
	7.7343/53	Australian dollars	
		Hong Kong dollars	
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WALKING DISTANCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL

North Korea may miss Olympics but not boycotting events abroad

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea is planning to send its first batch of professional boxers abroad, indicating it is not seeking isolation in sports, despite reports that it may stay away from the Atlanta Olympics next year.

An ethnic Korean sports leader in Japan expressed doubts Friday about North Korea's participation in the centennial Summer Games set to draw a record 195 countries or more.

But, at the same time, a Tokyo ring promoter confirmed plans to launch Barcelona Olympic flyweight champion Choi Chol-Su and several other North Korea boxers into a professional

career in Japan.

International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch said in Japan last week that of the 197 national Olympic committees all but North Korea and Afghanistan had accepted invitations to participate in the Atlanta Games.

Samaranch added he still hoped North Korea, which had not given any reasons for its possible absence from the Games, would turn up in Atlanta and that he had maintained contacts with North Korean officials.

However, an official of the Korean Amateur Athletic Association in Japan, a group of ethnic Koreans closely

guided by Pyongyang's leadership, said: "We are inclined to believe that our republic will not take part in the Games."

"When we took part in the 1992 Games in Barcelona, our republic signed up well in advance," said the official, who declined to be named.

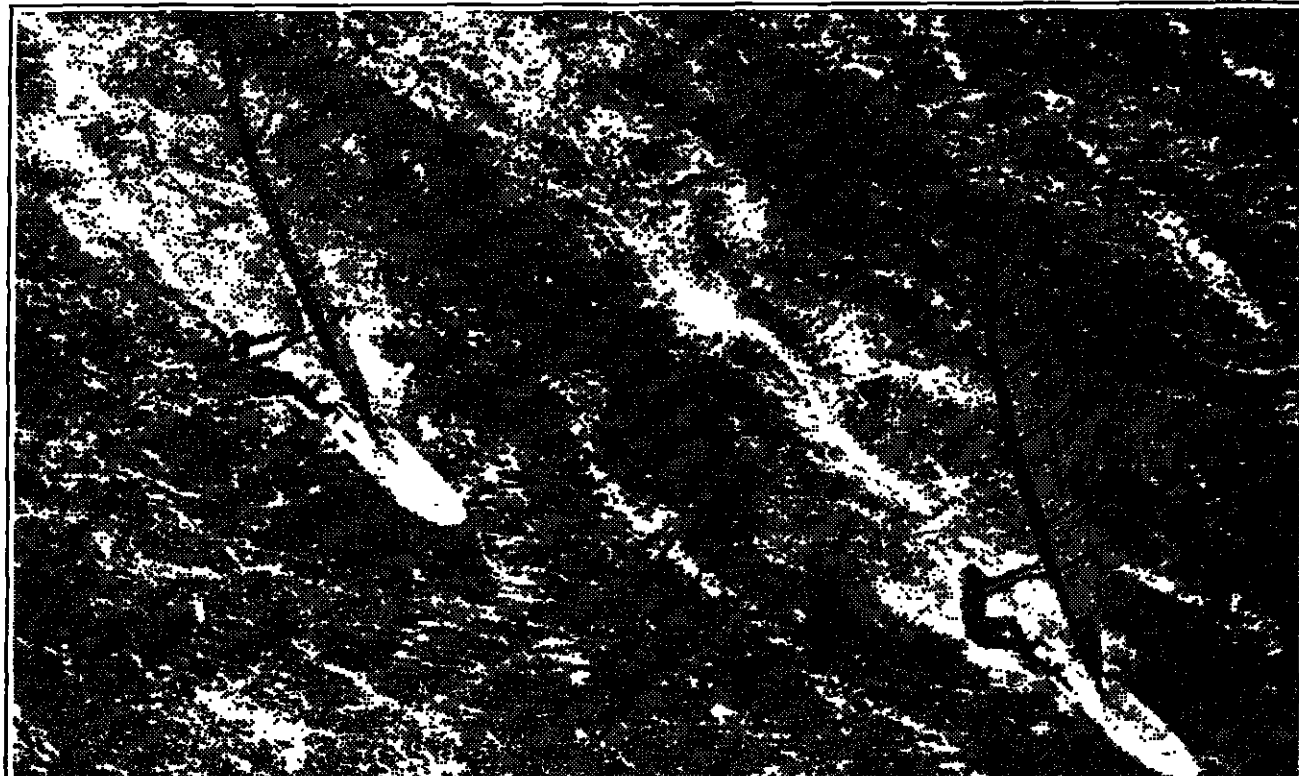
He said that members of his association were among officials who represented North Korea at the Barcelona Olympics. The association sent officials to the 1995 Student Games although no North Koreans competed in them.

Cash-strapped North Korea, now ravaged by floods, has shunned several

international sporting events, including the Lillehammer Winter Olympics and two editions of Student Games. It however took part in the inaugural East Asian Games in 1993.

But Japan's prize-fighting promoter Katsuji Nagashima said North Korea was all ready to back the plans for the professional debuts of its top boxers, including national champions.

He said that preparations were under way to obtain permits for Choi, one of the four North Korean gold medalists at Barcelona, and a few other North Korean boxers to enter Japan, perhaps by February.



Nikos Kakkamanakis of Greece (right) is overall leader in the Colibri Mistral World Windsurfing Championships. The Championships continue until Sunday (Reuters photo)

Panathinaikos overcome Bologna; Benetton, Leverkusen win

BOLOGNA (R) — Nikos Ekonomou scored 25 points to lead Panathinaikos of Greece to a 72-69 victory over Italy's Virtus Bologna in a European Clubs' Championship Group match on Thursday.

Marksman Ekonomou and the muscle of American forward Dominique Wilkins proved too much for Bologna despite a late surge rally which saw the Italians shave eight points off a 10-point deficit.

Bologna started brightly as Alijan Komazec, who had a game-high 26 points, scored 11 and hauled in three rebounds to pace the hosts to an early eight-point lead.

But Panathinaikos, who dashed Bologna's hopes of reaching the finals last year in a blistering rout in Athens, soon had the Italians in foul trouble as post Augusto Binelli had to sit out much of the second half with four fouls.

Timely baskets by Ekonomou and composed playmaking by John Korfas managed to foil most of the Italian initiatives while Binelli, who finished with a disappointing six points, fouled out late in the game.

In Antibes, France, French champions Antibes surrendered a crucial point when they lost 82-81 at home to Germany's Bayer Leverkusen.

A free throw by Michael Koch in the dying seconds on a foul from American Tony White allowed the Germans to score their third victory of the series after they trailed by five points with four minutes left.

White, leading scorer in the series, was not in his best form but still managed 20 points.

By contrast, Leverkusen's two American, Antonio Dawson, top scorer with 22 points, and Chris Corbani, were brilliant.

In Malaga, Spain, Italian team Benetton Treviso snatched a narrow 72-70 victory over Unicaja Malaga in a Group A match on Thursday.

Benetton's win ended the Spanish team's 11-game spell of home wins.

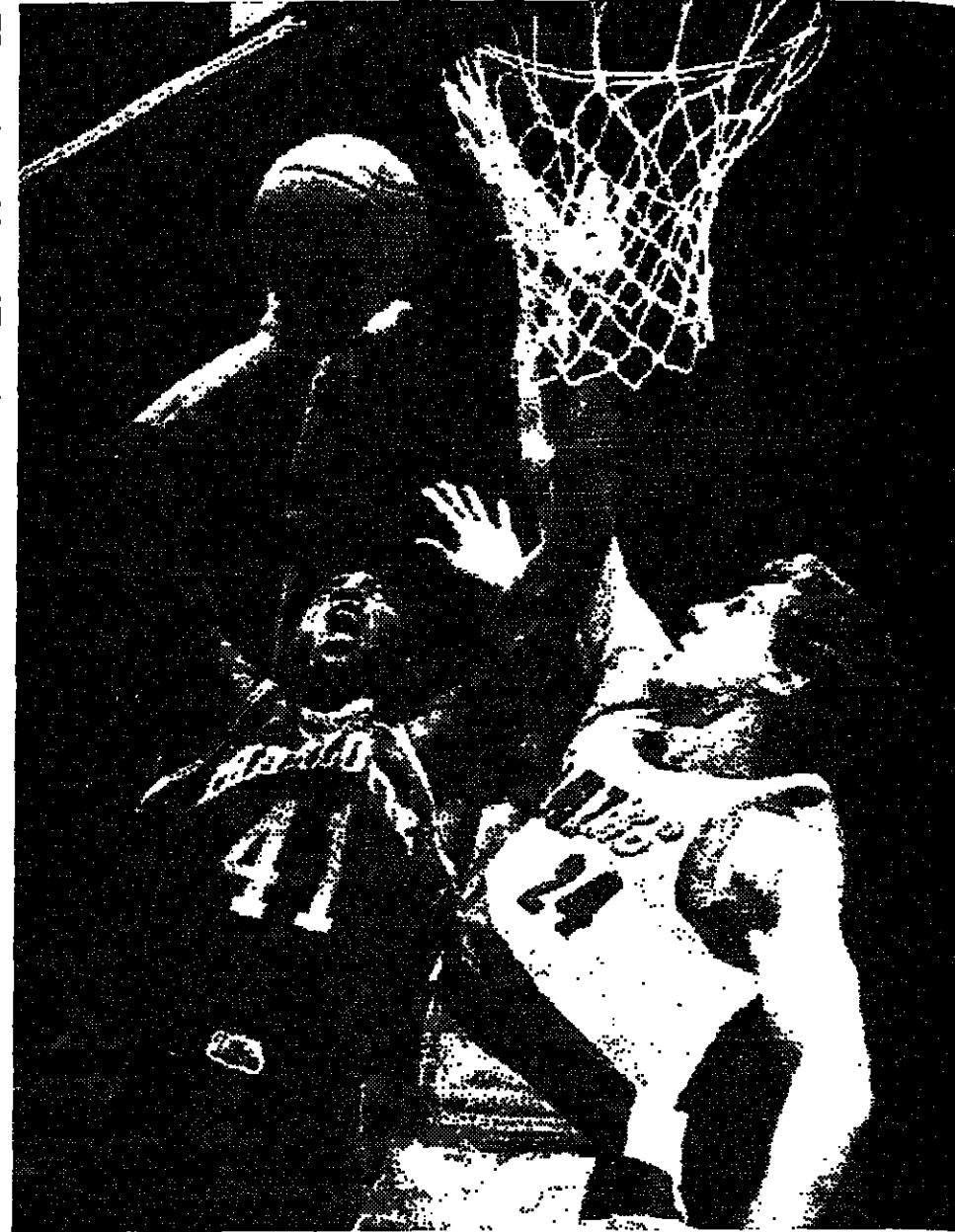
The closely fought match, which went into overtime after the teams were level at 61-61, was clinched by a hat-trick from Benetton defender Henry Williams.

Pivot Kenny Miller gave Unicaja a lead of 10-0 in the first 10 minutes, but found himself waning in the second half when faced with the power of his mighty Italian counterparts.

Benetton's aggressive tactics in defence allowed them to recoup early losses and Williams, who had been lying low in the first half, surged forward to complete their victory.

Unicaja were playing without Russian Sergei Bubkov and Fredy Navarrete, both of whom are not registered for European competition. Dani Romero was also missing with a shoulder injury.

But the Malagans had been fairly confident of victory. The last time they lost at their Ciudad Jardin Stadium was to Barcelona in May.



Glen Rice (41) of the Charlotte Hornets gets past the defence of Chris Dudley (24) of the Portland Trail Blazers during first quarter NBA action (Reuters photo)

Pippen takes spotlight as Hawks crash

ATLANTA (R) — Scottie Pippen stepped up to take his turn in the spotlight Thursday and lit it up from the outside to help the stampeding Chicago Bulls crush the Atlanta Hawks 127-108.

Scottie Pippen shot 12-of-19 from the field including 5-of-7 from three-point range on his way to a season-high 30 points and Michael Jordan added 22 as Chicago (18-2) posted their eighth straight victory.

Chicago, off to their best start ever, showed no let-down from their showdown win Wednesday over Orlando and maintained a 7½-game lead over Indiana in the Central Division.

Ken Norman had five points during a 10-2 Atlanta run midway through the third as the Hawks pulled within 73-70.

The Bulls answered with a 20-5 spurt that gave them a commanding 93-75 lead near the end of the quarter. Pippen had 10 of his points, including a three-pointer to cap the run.

"We kind of took control of the game," Jordan said. "We had a challenge of not having a letdown from last night's win."

"Right now we're enjoying playing the game," said Bulls coach Phil Jackson. "Michael and Pippen stepped their game up. Michael played ferocious defence and Pippen hit some three's."

Steve Smith and Stacey Augmon had 17 points apiece for the Hawks, who have lost seven of their last eight.

In New York, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf scored nine of his 25 points in the final 4:09 to lead the Denver Nuggets to a 103-94 victory over the New York Knicks.

The win was the sixth in seven games for the Nuggets, who reached .500 (10-10) after an 0-6 start.

"We didn't panic down the stretch, we executed," Nuggets coach Bernie Bickerstaff said.

"We made some big shots and came up with some big rebounds. We're fortunate to have a young team, because they had no fear playing against a team like this."

Patrick Ewing led New York with 30 points and 12 rebounds.

The Knicks played without starting forward Charles Oakley, their leading rebounder, who was sidelined with a strained left Achilles tendon. The Knicks were outscored, 51-37.

"I think it's a good lesson how much this team needs Oak (Oakley) on the floor," said Knicks coach Don Nelson.

The loss prevented the Knicks (16-6) from moving into a first-place tie with Orlando in the Atlantic Division.

In Dallas, David Robinson had 33 points and Sean Elliott scored 12 of his 27 points in the third quarter as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Dallas Mavericks 126-111.

Avery Johnson added 21 points as the Spurs snapped a three-game losing streak and moved to within 3½ games of the Houston in the Midwest.

"That's the best we played in a while, that's our style of basketball," said Spurs head coach Bob Hill. "We really kept offensive pressure and kept Avery Johnson in the open court."

The Mavericks played without head coach Dick Motta, who missed the game following the death of his father, Assistant Brad Davis and Kip Motta, Dick's son, served as co-coaches.

In Portland, Clifford Robinson scored 16 of his 28 points in the third quarter to

lead the Portland Trail Blazers to a 116-109 victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

Robinson scored nine points in a 21-3 third-quarter run that turned a 70-58 deficit into a 79-73 lead.

Rod Strickland had 21 points and 14 assists for Portland.

Glen Rice led Charlotte with 33 points. Dell Curry matched a season-high with 27 points, including seven three-pointers.

In Toronto, Rik Smits capped a 28-point effort by hitting a turnaround jumper from the top of the key with half a second left, lifting the Indiana Pacers to a 103-100 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Reggie Miller gave the Pacers a 100-98 lead with nine seconds to play when he hit the second of two free throws. Toronto rookie Damon Stoudamire tied it with three seconds left by making a pair of free throws.

Smits then hit the winning jumper in what looked like a replay of his shot that gave Indiana a victory in Game Four of last year's Eastern Conference finals against Orlando.

Oliver Miller finished with 22 points to lead Toronto.

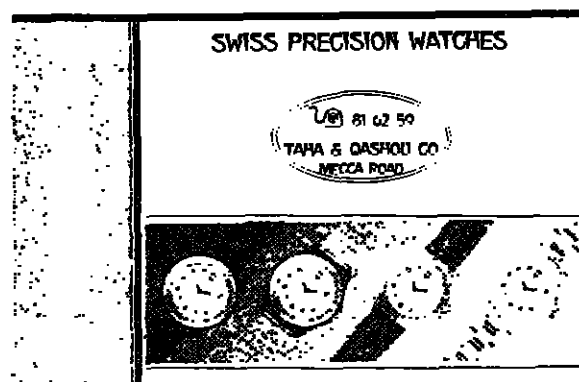
In Los Angeles, Loy Vaught had 20 points and Malik Sealy added 19 as the Los Angeles Clippers halted a nine-game losing streak with an 89-84 win over the injury-riddled Miami Heat.

The Clippers trailed by eight points at halftime but outscored the heat 32-16 in the third quarter to take the lead for good.

Kevin Gamble had 20 of his 24 points in the second quarter and Kurt Thomas added 19 for Miami, missing starters Alonzo Mourning, Billy Owens, Kevin Willis and Predrag Danilovic.

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

4Q 87 09 42 0Q 10 653 4A 4

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1A Pass 10 Pass

2NT Pass 7 Pass

What action do you take?

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

4K 94 0Q 17 0A 986 4A K 10

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1A Pass 10 Pass

2NT Pass 7 Pass

What action do you take?

1A Pass 1A Pass

2A Pass 2A Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 5 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

4A Q 10 75 0A CK J 10 6 4 10 9

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1A Pass 2A Pass

20 Pass 20 Pass

What do you bid now?

Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

4Q 8 8 2 0Q 10 6 5 0 5 2 4Q 4

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1A Pass 1A Pass

20 Pass 20 Pass

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SPORTS
IN BRIEF

Sainz signs for Ford

BARCELONA (AFP) — Spanish rally driver Carlos Sainz, a two-time world rally champion, is set to sign a two-year contract with Ford for the 1996 championship. Sainz, second in this year's championship, is being replaced by Colin McRae, who won the title last year.

Maradona quits Boca

BOCA JONIERS (AFP) — Diego Maradona is to quit Boca Juniors after a row with the club's president, Mauricio Macri, over who should coach the team. The 33-year-old Maradona, who returned to Boca Juniors after being banned for 15 months because of drug use, had wanted the job for himself. Macri, however, is reported to want to hire former Argentine national coach Carlos Bilardo. After Maradona's return, Boca Juniors surged to a six-point advantage in the league. But the team then lost ground and squandered their chance of the title while Maradona became increasingly criticised for not attending training sessions.

Foster breaks own record

SHEFFIELD (R) — Briton Mark Foster broke his own world short-course record in the 50m butterfly Friday, with a time of 23.45 seconds. Foster had set the previous record of 23.55 seconds in the time Sheffield pool in February of this year.

Seizinger wins downhill

T. ANTON (AFP) — Germany's Katja Seizinger won the women's World Cup downhill race here on Friday, clocking 2 min 6.68sec. Seizinger was 0.44sec ahead of Switzerland's Heidi Zurbuchen, and 0.51sec in front of Austria's Alexandra Leissnitzer. Seizinger said afterwards: "I did not think I would be good enough for first place. I made two or three little errors and, as a piste technician so difficult as today, you are not allowed the least mistake."

Cafafogo beat Santos

JO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Cafafogo beat Santos 2-1 in the first game of the final of Brazil's national soccer championship. The two teams met again on Sunday at Sao Paulo for the championship's last and decisive match. The winner qualifies for next year's Libertadores of America soccer tournament.

China's
swimming
coach
retires

BEIJING (AFP) — Chen Longping, China's national swimming coach, has officially retired after seven years of hard work marred in part by scandal. "I have just turned 60 and we therefore reached the official age limit," Chen said in a telephone interview Friday, adding that he will henceforth be an advisor to the swimming federation. Chen, who led the national team in 1988, later guided these swimmers, especially men, to astonishing results. He shaped two generations of top world-class swimmers. They shone at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and during the 1994 World Championships, swept 12 of the 16 medals at stake, smashing five world records.

European soccer transfer
system ruled illegal

LUXEMBOURG (R) — The European Court of Justice appeared to sound the death knell for soccer's system of transfers and its limits on foreign players on Friday, saying they breached European Union (EU) laws.

In a lengthy case brought by Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman, the court ruled that soccer players were entitled to the same freedom of movement as other EU workers and that the current transfer system restricted this freedom.

The ruling had been dreaded by the European and world soccer governing bodies UEFA and FIFA. It cannot be applied retroactively but is nevertheless likely to cause a massive upheaval.

No appeal is possible against the court's decision. UEFA has said the ruling, which had been widely expected after a recommendation in September from one of the court's chief legal advisers, could destroy many small soccer clubs by cutting off vital transfer fees.

FIFA backed UEFA, saying such a ruling would leave EU countries out of step with the rest of the world.

Friday's court ruling said EU laws precluded restrictions on players' movements between clubs and on the number of foreigners who could play for a team.

Most observers had believed Bosman would win his case, which started in 1990 when his club FC Liege in Belgium blocked a transfer to France's Dunkirk.

Liege later suspended Bosman, who went to court and is now seeking damages of about \$1 million from UEFA

and the Belgian soccer union, claiming he has been blacklisted from football.

UEFA and its 49 member associations launched a campaign to head off a ruling in favour of Bosman, saying it would split European football in two, creating a huge gap between the big club and the rest and possibly forcing smaller clubs to abandon youth teams and training schemes.

But they won little public support from Europe's leading clubs, while player unions and their international federation (FIFPRO) also took Bosman's side.

Bosman also won backing this week from EU competition commissioner Karel Van Miert, who said in a magazine interview that soccer was an economic activity which should be bound by EU internal market rules.

Anticipating the court's decision, Italy's senate last month approved a measure which, if it becomes law, would allow soccer clubs to field teams composed entirely of foreign players in domestic games as long as they were EU citizens. The measure still has to go to the Italian lower house.

Chronology of Bosman transfer case

★ 1982 — Bosman, then 17, signs as a professional for Belgian first division club Standard Liege.

★ 1988 — Moves to FC Liege, another Belgian first division club, for \$100,000.

★ June 1990 — Wants to move to French second division side Dunkirk FC after FC Liege cut his wages by 60 per cent in a new contract, which they were able to do under Belgian rules. FC Liege demand \$800,000 which Dunkirk refused. Liege subsequently deny Bosman a free transfer before suspending him.

★ August 1990 — Bosman takes his club and Belgian soccer union to court in Liege to seek damages.

★ November 1990 — The court allows Bosman to play for French third division team Saint Quentin. Bosman says he was forced to seek a new club abroad as he was boycotted in Belgium.

★ May 1991 — Liege appeals court confirms verdict of lower court that Bosman can move freely to new club. Appeals court later asks court of justice how it should interpret EU rules on free movement of workers.

★ May 1991 — Playing days at St. Quentin are over but Bosman still receives unemployment benefit in France.

★ January 1992 — Joins team at St. Denis in Reunion.

★ September 1992 — Returns to Belgium but unable to find a new berth and is not entitled to any unemployment benefit.

★ May 1993 — Joins Belgian third division team Olympic Charleroi.

★ May 1994 — Moves to fourth division team Vise, where he still plays at the age of 31.

★ March 1995 — Belgium's highest court rejects new appeal by UEFA, Belgian soccer union and FC Liege.

★ June 1995 — Court of Justice hearings in Luxembourg, a European parliament member calls Bosman a hero. Bosman asks for about \$1 million in damages from UEFA, Belgian soccer union and FC Liege.

★ September 20, 1995 — Advocate-General Carl Otto Lenz advises the court to rule that soccer's system of transfers and its limits on foreign players are illegal.

★ November 3 — UEFA issues open letter, signed by the 49 presidents of European soccer's national associations, saying that soccer will be split in two if the court follows Lenz's advice.

★ November 24 — World soccer body FIFA backs UEFA and expresses concern that ruling in favour of Bosman will leave EU countries out of step with the rest of the world.

★ November 28 — Italian senate approves measure which would allow soccer clubs to field teams composed entirely of foreign players in domestic games as long as they were EU citizens. The measure still has to pass the Italian lower house.

★ December — EU competition commissioner Karel Van Miert says soccer is an economic activity which should be bound by EU internal market rules.

★ December — International federation of players' unions FIFPRO says it will organise a benefit match for Bosman early next year between a team of top European players and a team of leading players from other parts of the world.

★ December 15 — Court rules in favour of Bosman. No appeal is possible.

Santa unlikely to bring Mathis a punch

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Buster Mathis Jr. freely admits to not owning a car, a house, a fancy wardrobe or any of the trappings of celebrity.

But he forgets to mention the biggest item he will be missing when he fights Mike Tyson on Saturday — a punch.

And it isn't likely Santa Claus is going to visit Mathis early this year to give him what he never had in building his 20-0 record against the Galley Salves of boxing.

In fact, Mathis, 25, already received his Christmas present — about \$500,000 — to take on Tyson (42-1) in the former champion's second fight since his release from prison last March. He served three years for rape.

In Tyson's first fight back, he destroyed Peter McNeeley in just 89 seconds. Many ring-siders don't think this fight is a safe bet to go much longer than that.

Tyson, 29, weighed in at a very well-conditioned 219 pounds (99.3 kg) on Thursday.

For the record Mathis, who would not take off his shirt at the weigh-in, and it seems impossible to find anyone who has seen him in the last few weeks without a baggy shirt draped over his ample, registered 224 pounds (101.6 kg).

The best fight on the card at the 18,000-seat spectrum likely will be a genuine grudge match between World Boxing Council (WBC) junior middleweight champion Terry Norris (40-6) and his International Boxing Federation counterpart Paul Vaden (24-0).

In another title fight, World Boxing Association junior middleweight champion Carl Daniels (35-1) will defend his title against former champion Julio Cesar

Vasquez (55-2 of Argentina). But it is still Tyson-Mathis that drives the card.

Mathis has skills than McNeeley. But that's like saying you have a two horsepower car ready for the Indianapolis 500 instead of a mule.

If by some stretch Tyson, who will be paid about \$5 million to fight Mathis, is sluggish in the early rounds, Mathis has enough experience to tie up Tyson inside, lean on him and maybe frustrate him enough to make a mistake.

But the problem then is that he has to be able to hurt Tyson when he gets careless. And Mathis has had only six

technical knockouts — not knockouts — in his career, and they came against such household names as Tim Martin, Justin Fortune, and Mike Ackie.

That kind of anaemic firepower is precisely why Mathis was chosen for Tyson, who already is scheduled to fight WBC champion Frank Bruno of Britain on March 16th.

Even Mathis' trainer, Joey Fariello, said earlier this week: "My guy shoots BBS and Tyson drops bombs."

As recently as Tuesday Fariello was imploring Mathis in a sparring session to throw more than one

punch and to come out of a crouch firing combinations.

He would come out of a crouch and almost come to full attention before throwing a punch. Meanwhile, a cruiserweight sparring partner consistently beat Mathis to the punch with lefts and rights to the head.

Tyson, on the other hand, was very impressive in man-handling his sparring partner last week.

Mathis, the son of a former, top-10 contender, Buster Mathis, who died last September, said the gym was no test of his skills, that he was trying new techniques and learning.

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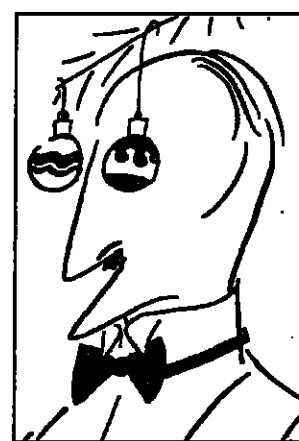
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New Year's Eve Dinner at Andalusia Restaurant
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Chairman
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U.S. group, N. Korea sign deal for nuclear reactors

NEW YORK (AP) — Ending three years of difficult negotiations, North Korea and a U.S.-led consortium signed a \$4.5 billion deal Friday to provide the North with two modern reactors promised under a 1994 accord in which Pyongyang froze its nuclear programme.

In a joint statement, the two sides hailed the agreement as "an important step towards full implementation" of a 1994 accord between the United States and North Korea aimed at reducing the threat of the communist government building nuclear weapons.

The Pyongyang government agreed in 1994 to freeze its controversial nuclear development programme in exchange for two Western-made, light-water reactors worth \$4 billion.

North Korea agreed to scrap its Soviet-style reactors, which produce far more weapons-grade plutonium.

Stephen Bosworth signed for the Korean Energy Development Organisation, which was formed this year to finance the project. Its principal financiers are South Korea, Japan and the United States. Ambassador Ho Jong signed for North Korea.

The extra half billion was tacked on to accommodate the North's demands for extras, including infrastructure. The consortium said it would send a team to North Korea soon to begin site surveys for the reactors.

South Korea will bear most of the reactor cost. Japan has promised to play "a substantial role" in funding the project.

In Tokyo, Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono hailed the agreement, which was endorsed in a cabinet meeting Friday.

South Korean government spokesman Kim Kyong-Woong said Friday's agreement was acceptable "because it guarantees our central role in designing and building the plants."

South Korean officials have expressed concern that the price-tag may increase and they may get stuck with much of the additional cost.

As part of the deal, North Korea will receive 100,000 tonnes of substitute fuel oil this year and 500,000 tonnes annually until the first of two 1,000-megawatt reactors is completed by 2003.

North Korea has already received the first-year shipment of 100,000 tonnes. The United States paid for the fuel.

The dispute began in 1992 when the North abruptly withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Western officials believe the communist government already has extracted enough plutonium to make at least one nuclear bomb.

After a series of negotiations with the United States, the North retracted the decision to quit the treaty. Subsequent talks stalled over new North Korean demands.

A deal was clinched last weekend after the North withdrew some of its key demands, including a power grid and a fuel fabricating plant.

The consortium agreed instead to build a port, access roads and a nuclear simulator for training purposes which would cost them at least \$500 million more.



ARAFAT IN NABLUS: A Palestinian boy brandishes a flag to welcome Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat in the West Bank town of Nablus on Friday after Israel withdrew from the town, handing it over to the PLO-led Palestinian National Authority (see page one) (AFP photo)

Hamas denies split over self-rule

By Saad Hattar
Agence France Presse

AMMAN — The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) denies a split has emerged in its stand towards Palestinian self-rule despite contradictory signals from its members inside the territories and abroad.

But Arab diplomats in Amman, where the Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghosheh is based, said the militant Palestinian group appears to have taken two different approaches to reconciliation efforts with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

While Hamas abroad keeps a hardline, members in the Gaza Strip have been responding to the efforts of Yasser Arafat, head of the self-rule authority, to coax Hamas into contesting the first Palestinian general elections.

But so far the group itself has stuck to its refusal to take part in the polls and drop the threat of violence, despite five previous reconciliation

bids between Hamas and the PNA since 1990.

Eight leaders of the group in the autonomous Gaza Strip travelled to Sudan on Thursday to prepare the ground for reconciliation talks with the PA due to take place in Cairo this weekend.

Mr. Ghosheh, before also leaving for Khartoum for talks between the membership inside the territories and abroad, still maintains that no date for a dialogue with the PNA has been set.

He dismissed remarks to the contrary from Hamas members in Gaza City who said it was due to open on Saturday.

"There is absolutely no discrepancy between Hamas, inside and outside Palestine. The movement has one body and it expresses its stance in a harmonic way," he said.

"I am the spokesman of the group," Mr. Ghosheh acknowledged, however, that "many stray declarations have been aired in the name of Hamas, but they were found to be

those of former Hamas member Imad Faluji," who was evicted from the movement this week.

"But now we kicked him out. And any member inside has to adhere to the group's code."

Hamas announced Tuesday the dismissal of Mr. Faluji for "failing to follow instructions." It also said that the weekly Al Watan, edited by Mr. Faluji, would no longer serve as the official Hamas mouthpiece.

Palestinian sources here said Mr. Faluji had grown so close to Mr. Arafat that he formed part of the PNA delegation for the Middle East economic summit in Amman at the end of October.

Mr. Arafat also named Mr. Faluji to lead a "national dialogue" with groups like Hamas which reject the autonomy deals with Israel, and the former Hamas member has said he would run as an Islamic independent candidate in the elections.

Mr. Ghosheh insists that the PNA has failed to "penetrate the ranks of Hamas inside, just as it failed to isolate the group's base in the Gaza Strip from the West Bank."

Although a Muslim fundamentalist party grouping former Hamas members has declared its intention to contest the polls, Mr. Ghosheh has distanced Hamas from the Islamic National Salvation Party.

"Any declarations from parties claiming to have ties with 'Hamas' are invalid and only represent the interests of the PNA," he argued.

"We tell those party members who to the ballots alone, for they only represent the PNA."

Mr. Ghosheh reiterated the group's strategy which is to "hold on to every inch of Palestine from the (Mediterranean) sea to the (Jordan) river, and we refuse to acknowledge the Zionist entity."

"If we recognise the PNA, then systematically we will have to accept the Zionist state," he said.

Canadian aid worker is held in connection with Islamabad blast

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A Canadian aid worker has been in jail since Dec. 10 on suspicion that he financed the suicide bombing that devastated the Egyptian embassy and killed 17 people, government officials said Friday.

Ahmad Saeed Khadr, known to police as Abu Abdul Rahman Khadr, was arrested in Pakistan's rugged North-West Frontier Province that borders Afghanistan, said Farhatullah Babar, the prime minister's press secretary.

Mr. Khadr, who is regional director of the Canadian-based aid agency Human Concern International, was picked up as he entered Pakistan from Afghanistan, Mr. Babar said.

A spokesman for the Canadian high commission in Islamabad said Mr. Khadr is reportedly "okay" although no one from the high commission has been able to visit him.

The spokesman, who would not be identified, said Pakistan has promised to give the Canadian authorities access to Mr. Khadr, but it was not known when.

Mr. Babar, meanwhile, denied reports that Mr. Khadr, who is of Egyptian origin, was extradited to Egypt.

"The investigation is still going on... the subject of extradition does not even arise," he said.

However, the reports of his extradition sparked threats from Egypt's Islamic group, Jihad, believed to be behind the Nov. 19 bombing of the Egyptian embassy here.

The threat, in a statement faxed to the Associated Press office in Cairo warned "the Pakistani government... will pay a high price in cases of handing over other Islamists, living on its territories."

The threat was issued by the Vanguard of Conquest, which is reportedly part of the Jihad group.

Mr. Babar said the government won't be cowed by the threat.

"Pakistan will not be blackmailed by these kinds of threats," he said. "Whatever is done will be done with due process of law."

Since signing an extradition treaty with Egypt about one year ago, Pakistan has extradited nine Egyptians.

Pakistan, however, has expelled as many as 2,000 Arabs from several countries, including Egypt, Sudan and Algeria.

Many of these Arabs came to Pakistan during the 1980s to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan and often are

referred to as Arab Afghans.

Many stayed in Pakistan and Afghanistan following the collapse of communism in Afghanistan in 1992. Egypt was among the countries who complained to Pakistan that its territory was being used as a militant Islamicist plot to overthrow of secular Arab governments.

Following the Egyptian embassy bombing Pakistani police investigated the many humanitarian aid organisations based in Pakistan but run by Arabs.

According to a confidential report acquired by the Associated Press police said some of these non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were sheltering terrorists and should be closed.

"All NGOs owned/run by Arabs... should be closed forthwith as they are doing no service to Pakistan and they are providing shelter to all criminals/terrorists under fake names," said the report prepared by the federal investigation agency.

"It is pertinent to mention that most of the Arabs, presently residing in Pakistan are staying in presumed names and forged/false documents," the report said.

Mr. Babar said the threat from Jihad has not resulted in additional security.

U.S. warns India against N-tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House warned Friday that nuclear tests by India could shake up the regional balance and doom the chances of a global test ban treaty amid reports that New Delhi was set to explode its first nuclear bomb in over 20 years.

"This administration is strongly committed to the goal of a comprehensive test ban," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry.

"Nuclear testing by any nation state jeopardises the environment in which that goal can be achieved and in the specific case of India, given the regional balance of power, such a test would be a very bad idea," he said.

The New York Times, citing U.S. intelligence experts, reported Friday that spy satellites had recorded scientific and technical activity at India's Pokhran nuclear test site in recent weeks.

It quoted the experts as saying they could not tell whether the activity involved preparations for exploding a nuclear bomb or some other experiment.

Rabbis issue call to arms against Golan withdrawal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Dozens of Israel's leading rabbis said it would be legal for Jews to take up arms against any plan to withdraw from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria in a declaration published Friday.

In the declaration, presented like a religious order in the newspaper of the National Religious Party (NRP), the rabbis said: "It is illegal for Jews to turn over to strangers parts of Eretz Israel (Greater Israel)."

"And it is legal to oppose this process using arms, including on the weekly sacred Sabbath, because it is a question of life and death," the rabbis said in the Hatzofe newspaper.

Among the signatures was that of Abraham Shapira, the former chief rabbi of Israel, and Rabbi Haim Druckman, a spiritual leader of the NRP, which has six members in the Israeli parliament.

An NRP member of parliament, Yitzhak Levy, said on Israeli radio that the declaration was signed by the rabbis two years ago and that it was republished on Friday without their authorisation.

Justice Minister David Libai said the statement was "very serious." "The rabbis do not have the right to issue

rabbinical statements that are anti-democratic and have political implications," he said.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said the declaration in Hatzofe "proves that the so-called reflection by the NRP after the murder of (Prime Minister) Yitzhak Rabin is only for show."

Mr. Rabin was killed during a Tel Aviv peace rally on Nov. 4 by Jewish extremist Yigal Amir, who opposed turning over land to Palestinians and claimed the values of nationalist parties and the NRP.

A violent campaign to destabilise the government and derail the peace process led by right-wing groups and morally supported by the rabbinical declarations, preceded Mr. Rabin's murder.

The NRP did some internal housecleaning after the assassination and accepted the reality of Israel's peace accord with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

"After the publication of the declaration in Hatzofe, I hope the government of (prime minister) Shimon Peres will stop kidding itself about the possibility of a rapprochement with the NRP," Mr. Sarid said.

French unions press Juppe despite votes that crumble strike

PARIS (AFP) — French trade unions will stage a new day of protest Saturday in the hope of forcing more concessions from Prime Minister Alain Juppe, but their three-week strike crumbled Friday as key transport workers voted to go back to work.

A majority of railwaymen, spearhead of the movement, decided to suspend the strike paralysing French railways since Nov. 23, the communist-led CGT railway workers' trade union said.

But the strikers said they would continue with other action, notably with Saturday's day of protest, calling for the total withdrawal of Juppe's welfare reforms.

Both Mr. Juppe and the trade unions tried to save face in a new deadlock, waiting for the outcome of the day of protest as the prime minister ignored calls from the unions to bring forward negotiations.

Mr. Juppe, who spent Friday in Bordeaux, southwest France, where he is mayor, is anxious for an end to the strikes without making further concessions, while the strikers want to avoid a messy end to the dispute and give the impression of victory.

The turnout in Saturday's demonstrations will be decisive in whether Mr. Juppe agrees to bring forward the negotiations and enlarge their agenda, for the moment scheduled for next Thursday.

Also Friday, Jean Bergegnou, president of the French national railway company SNCF, offered to resign "when traffic resumes." One trade union said Mr. Bergegnou was being treated as "a scapegoat."

Meanwhile the Paris bourse fell as operators realised the likely cost to the economy of the three-week stoppage. The CAC 40 index dropped 0.84 per cent to 1,859.24 after gaining 2.82 per cent Thursday, amid estimates that the strike would cut French gross national product (GNP) by between 0.2 and 0.4 per cent in 1995.

The CGT and the independent Force Ouvriere chose Saturday for what will be the seventh day of action in the conflict in the hope of bringing in private sector workers. Last Tuesday, 2.2 million public sector strikers demonstrated across the country, according to the trade unions.

CGT head Louis Viannet and Force Ouvriere leader Marck Blondel on Thursday called for early talks with Mr. Juppe. But the latter reportedly stuck by Dec. 21 as the date and was adamant he would not negotiate his social security reform plan, after giving way on other key issues, according to teachers' union leader Michel De-

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. team leaves Iraq after checking crash site

By Shafika Mattar
The Associated Press

RUWEISHID — A team of American military and Red Cross officials arrived Friday from Iraq after a week-long search for the remains of a U.S. pilot shot down on the first night of the 1991 Gulf war.

It was not immediately clear if the 15-member team was able to recover the remains of Michael Speicher, 33, whose fighter-bomber went down over the desert in western Iraq after taking off from the aircraft carrier Saratoga on Jan. 16, 1991.

The team, which includes 11 American technicians, identification laboratory experts and aircraft crash investigators, refused to talk to reporters after they crossed into Jordan at this border post about 500 kilometres east of Amman.

The search represented the first formal visit of U.S. military officials to Iraq since the end of the war, which liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in February 1991.

The United States remains staunchly opposed to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and there is no sign of improving relations.

"This mission is strictly a humanitarian effort to account for an American

pilot whose remains have never been recovered," said a statement by the Department of Defence in Washington on Thursday.

The U.S. government has said Iraq's ground-based air defences, not Iraqi jet fighters, shot down all the American aircraft.

Some air crew and intelligence analysts have maintained, however, that Speicher, who was flying a navy FA-18, was shot down by an Iraqi-piloted MiG-25, the Boston Globe reported.

Another theory is that Speicher's plane was involved in a freak collision with a MiG-25, the New York Times reported.

Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said earlier that a party of hunters, whom he did not further identify, happened upon the crash site two years ago. He did not pinpoint the location. The Boston Globe reported the site was about 190 kilometres west of Baghdad.

The Globe reported that the hunters found the plane's canopy and several other parts, including the nose cone, in reasonably good condition.

Mr. Bacon said they photographed the site and brought back a piece of the wreckage that enabled the Pentagon to confirm that it was an American plane.

COLUMN

Gunmen hijack bus in Kenya, rob tourists

NAIROBI (R) — Gunmen hijacked a tour bus and robbed seven Danish tourists who were going to one of Kenya's premier tourist destinations, a newspaper said Friday.

One of the robbers shot out the windshield of the bus going to the southwest Masai Mara Game Reserve Thursday, dragged the driver from the vehicle and dumped him on the roadside, the privately-owned East African Standard said.

Four bandits then drove the vehicle for about one kilometre, robbing the tourists' possessions before escaping into nearby bushland, the paper said, quoting Nakuru police. The seven Danes were not hurt, but the driver who was beaten up by the robbers was taken to hospital with injuries.

The head of Kenya's Association Of Tour Operators said in October that bad publicity based on perceptions of lack of safety in Kenya was hurting the country's key tourism industry. Kenya formed a special tourist police unit last month to improve security for visitors.

French unions press Juppe despite votes that crumble strike

Santa gets own Canadian postcode

TORONTO (R) — Canada has given Santa Claus his own postal code for Christmas, Canada Post officials said. Letters to Santa at the North Pole, Canada — there are more than one million of them each year — will be sped on their way if they carry the postal code HOH 0H0, they said. The letters, written in more than 24 languages by children as far away as Japan, Lithuania and Chile, are answered in their languages of origin by about 10,000 Canada Post volunteers, said Deborah Harron, Toronto coordinator of the 12-year programme to answer children's letters to Santa.

Wandering cat gets phonecard

LONDON (R) — The owner of a wandering cat has bought a telephone chargecard for her flighty feline so people can phone home and say where the black Burmese has strayed to. Beryl Venters said six-year-old Cagney was always going missing from her home in the southern English city of Winchester. So Cagney now has a chargecard on her collar. "Cagney is always sticking her nose into things and running off chasing anything that moves. The chargecard means anyone who finds her will be able to phone me and tell me where she is without having to pay," she told reporters.

Porker makes pig of himself, scoffs party buffet

LONDON (R) — A two-year-old Peruvian porker made a pig of himself when he scoffed a birthday party buffet meal fed to him by a British keeper who thought the box of goodies was full of scraps. It was five hours before caterers realised their delivery of salmon and prawn sandwiches and other delicacies intended for 60 guests celebrating a birthday party at a wildlife centre was missing as the contented pig, named Jackson, snoozed. A local helper had mistaken the box for leftovers delivered daily from local shops and tipped the treats into Jackson's sty.

Papandreou may announce retirement next month

ATHENS (AFP) — Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, who has been in hospital for nearly four weeks with kidney and respiratory trouble, may announce his retirement next month, press reports said Friday.

The reports carried by several Athens dailies followed a surprise meeting late Thursday between Greek President Costis Stephanopoulos and Georges Papandreou, son of the 76-year-old statesman and the education minister.

The reports noted that the intervention of the head of state, whose post is purely ceremonial, was highly unusual.

Georges Papandreou told journalists after the meeting that he "would do

his duty" if he had to discuss "political issues relating to Greece" with his father in coming days.

All Greek newspapers interpreted this remark as a sign that the younger Papandreou might persuade his ailing father to announce his official retirement from politics, clearing the way for his succession.

This theory was further backed up by recent comments by Costas Skandalidis, secretary-general of Mr. Papandreou's ruling PASOK socialist party.

Mr. Skandalidis, who is close to the senior Papandreou, told the pro-government daily Ta Nea that "changes would take place in January."

The premier was reported to be in stable condition. The latest medical

bulletin said he was still taking antibiotics, but continued to breathe normally and was no longer suffering from a fever.

He had been admitted to the Onassis cardiology centre on Nov. 20 suffering from pneumonia, but his condition was complicated by kidney problems.

Doctors treating the prime minister have been giving him kidney dialysis treatment every two days, said the bulletin, adding the state of his heart remained unchanged.

Mr. Papandreou's health had worsened Monday after an infection led to high temperatures. A week ago Mr. Papandreou underwent a tracheotomy to counter his breathing problems.

Several candidates are waiting in the wings to step into Mr. Papandreou's shoes. They include Defence Minister Gerassimos Arsenis, Interior Minister and acting Premier Akis Tsolatzopoulos and Costas Simitis, a former minister and one of PASOK's leading lights.

Parliament Speaker Apostolos Kaklamanis is also touted as a possible successor.

If Mr. Papandreou were to step down, his successor would be picked by PASOK's 169-strong parliamentary group. Mr. Simitis and Mr. Arsenis are said to be running neck and neck at the top of the pack.

But several deputies made it clear on Thursday that before making a deci-

sion, they wanted the 15 doctors treating Mr. Papandreou to state clearly whether he has any chances of ever resuming his functions.

The jockeying for the succession has ridden the ups and downs of Papandreou's health and severely strained PASOK unity.

Greek public opinion, however, appears keen to bring the curtain down on the Papandreou era. A poll released Wednesday said nearly 75 per cent of voters favoured the "rapid appointment of a successor."

Another poll published Friday said more than 90 per cent of respondents considered that Mr. Papandreou had finished his political career.